

**Bird & Mammal Trip Report**  
**Ecuador (Dec 2022 - Jan & Jun – Jul 2023)**



*Rob Jansen*  
photography

# Introduction

## About us

We are two enthusiastic nature lovers who travel the world together to search for stunning birds, fascinating mammals and incredible nature. Our world travel started in October 2021 in Chile, where we bought a car to drive through South-America in search of birds and mammals for about 2 years.

**Rob Jansen** is biologist and wildlife photographer, and thus has a lot of knowledge about species and ecology. He is enthusiastic about all that's in nature, but mainly photographs birds and mammals.

**Romy Jansen-Houtzager** is marketing professional. Our social media accounts, the look and feel of this report and the website are her work. In the field, she is an excellent spotter and very patient (give me some of her patience ...and hurry!).



**Rob** photographing the **Jocotoco Antpitta**

**Romy** at an alligator nest

## Information and how to use this trip report

This trip report covers the country Ecuador. Our visit to Ecuador is split in two separate periods. We visited the east on our way north, and the west on our way south. This mainly had to do with better chances for good weather and the planning for other countries like Colombia and Peru. We understand that this trip report covers way too many locations to visit within one holiday. As we visited less known regions, and reports on independent birding with good coordinates were surprisingly few for such a well birded country, we still wanted to write about all the locations we visited.

We travelled Ecuador from the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2022 – 24<sup>th</sup> of January and again from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June – 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2023. For all photos of our Ecuador trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website. We would love to hear from you!

 [www.robjansenphotography.com/ecuador](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/ecuador)

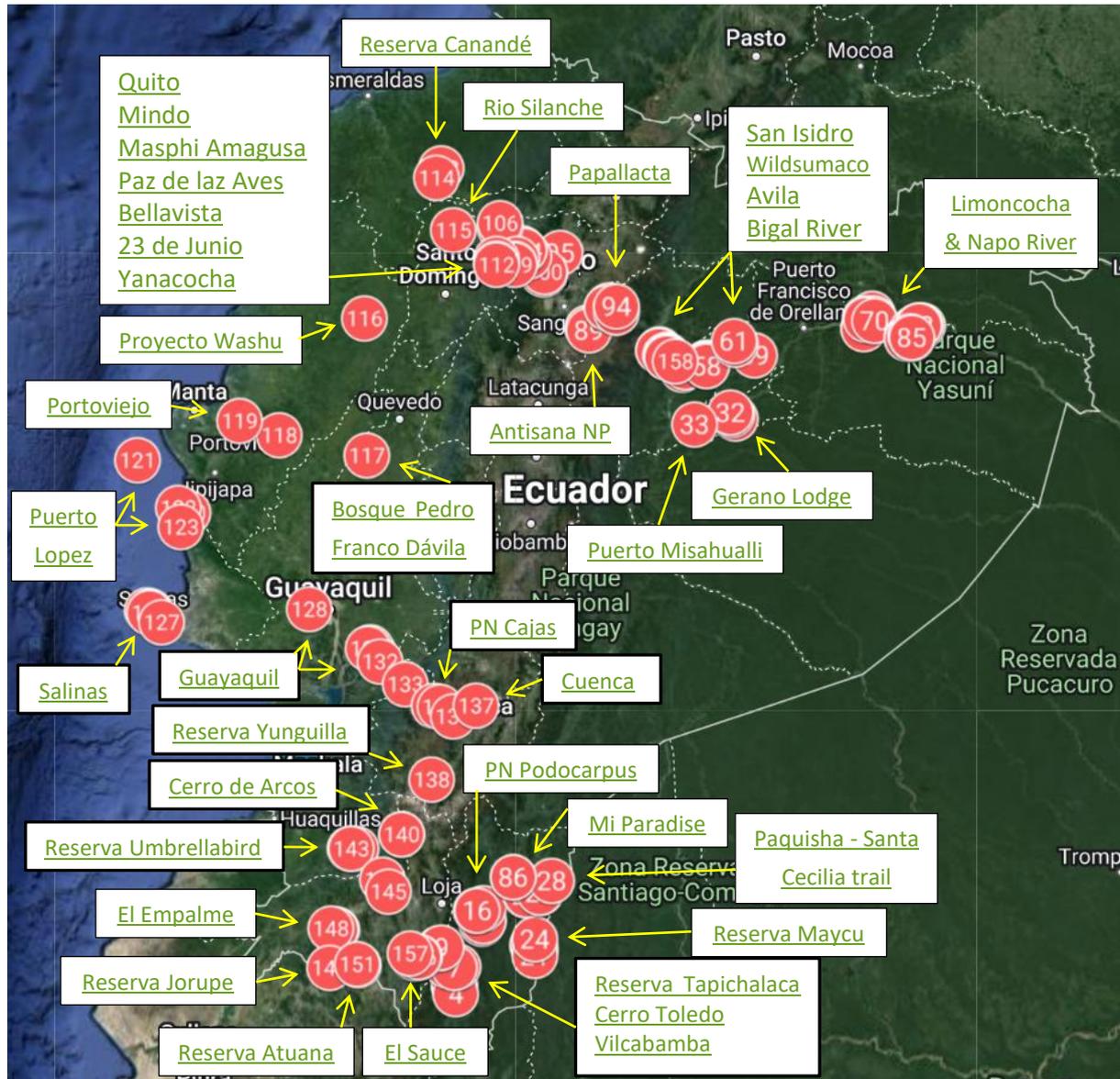
 [www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography](https://www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography)

Species are highlighted in this trip report: **blue for birds**, **red for mammals** and **green for herpetofauna**. Target species which we missed at a specific spot are written in *italic*. This gives you an idea which species to pay extra attention to. All observations made by us in Ecuador can be found

on Observation.org. We observed a total of about 959 bird species and 36 mammal species in Ecuador. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

For more trip reports see our website: [www.robjansenphotography.com/trip-reports](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/trip-reports)

## Map and specific locations



After bird- & mammalwatching large parts of Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia & Peru (see other [trip reports on the website](#)), we decided to cross to Ecuador. We focussed mainly on the eastern side of Ecuador before going to Colombia, and focussed on the Andes and western side of Ecuador on our way back south. We made a [map in Google My Maps](#) with pointers of interesting trails and places and specific bird and mammal locations. You can view this map, download the points and add them to your own map (click on the three dots above the legend and download the

KML file and drag this to your own map), or add them in the app 'Maps.me'. Maps.me has most walking trails on it and is usable offline. Route navigation by car doesn't always work great and it's better to use Google Maps for that purpose.

## Weather and timing

We visited Ecuador as part of our world travel from the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2022 until the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and again on our way back from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June until the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2023. The weather was generally quite nice, but the rainy season had started during our first period in Ecuador (Dec-Jan) and we had a couple of days with rain for the most part of the day. Locals said the rain season is just starting and that rains are supposed to be worse in the following months. The forest seemed quiet at times especially in the Amazon (January), and for that an earlier visit than ours is advised.

On our way back we had lots of rain, strong winds and fog in the high mountains and rain east of the Andes (June). West of the Andes we had quite good weather for most of the time (June-July), without too much rain hindering birding. It was however the year of El Niño, which caused the Tumbes to be totally green instead of dry. This made it harder to find certain birds. Some of them already left their breeding sites; where this is the case we mentioned in at the location. Temperatures depended heavily on altitude, so layers are key!

## Transportation

Our transportation in Ecuador was of course our Toyota 4Runner SR5 4.0 2010 (2WD) called 'Forrest'. We bought this car in Santiago (Chile) and got it converted so that we could sleep in it as well. Our 2WD did well in Ecuador and we barely had any problems on the road. Roads are generally really good, even the gravel ones. After the main roads in Colombia and eastern Brazil, these might have been the best roads we came across in the whole of South America. There are of course always a few exceptions where we needed high clearance/good shock absorbers. At locations where this is the case we mentioned it in the text. Generally a simple sedan (2WD) will do really well in Ecuador, and there is no need to hire an expensive car.



Our loyal friend Forrest at Podocarpus NP



Forrest on the Santa Cecilia trail at Paquisha

## Books & Apps

- Birds of Ecuador. J.F. Freile & R. Restall, Helm Field Guides, 2018. *A nice guide, but with some surprisingly bad and basic drawings for such a recent guide (compared to the bird books of neighbouring countries). Nevertheless the book to pick, with altitude information & attention to ssp.*
- [Birds of Ecuador app](#). *Very handy to have this app! It has similar (and even a bit more) information as in the book. It also includes sounds, but not for all species.*
- Merlin app for the birds sound. *Just amazing that this app is free. Most species have sounds in there (except for e.g. Black Tinamou and Loja Tapaculo), and it will suffice.*
- BirdNet app for recording the bird sounds. *If you don't know all the sounds, BirdNet can give a possible ID. It helped us a few times when we were frustratingly searching for a bird we heard deep inside the shrubs. A sure ID of a bird from BirdNet saved us some time here and there ;)*
- iOverlander app for camping places. *This app gives nice information on where to camp or buy stuff.*

## Equipment

**Photography:** Sony A9 II + 200-600mm + 1.4x converter + Sony 24-105mm, GoPro Hero 9

**Binoculars and telescope:** Swarovski EL 8x32 WB, Eden 8x32 XP, Swarovski 65HD + 25-50mm

**Heat scope/Thermal imager:** Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V ([lahouxbirding.com](http://lahouxbirding.com)). A great heat scope from a company in The Netherlands. I owned other brands, but we are super happy with the sharpness, modes and light weight of this heat scope! More here: [robjansenphotography.com/lahouxbirding](http://robjansenphotography.com/lahouxbirding)

**Spotlighting:** Fenix HT18 Long Distance Flashlight (powerful, very focussed and my preferred choice for open areas), Fenix TK35 2018-edition (less powerful and focussed than the HT18, but still very strong and nice for spotlighting!), Fenix FD41 Focus Flashlight.

## Use of cell phones in Ecuador

We bought two Claro SIM cards in Peru and we were able to use them in Ecuador. To recharge we had to use a website, as the credit for us was in Soles instead of USD. We recharged via [MobileRecharge](#). You pay a small fee, but for us this was worth it and way more convenient. On the way back we did buy an Ecuadorian SIM at the border and this made it way easier to recharge at any store with a Claro sign outside.

## Paying in Ecuador

A bit surprising to us was that paying in Ecuador is often done in cash. Cards are not accepted at many places; lots of gas stations for example don't accept any cards. Be sure to bring enough USD. Banco del Austro and Banco Internacional were two banks that didn't charge us a fee for withdrawing money. They also had the highest limit per withdrawal; 200USD per withdrawal, and allowed multiple withdrawals per card per day.

## Water-to-Go

To reduce plastic usage on our travels we bought Water-to-Go water bottles. Read about our experience with Water-to-Go on our website: [www.robjansenphotography.com/water-to-go](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/water-to-go). The bottle and filters are not too expensive, and you will have your investment back within one holiday. If you order with the voucher **RJANSEN15** you will get **15% discount** as well! Check the website here: [www.watertogousa.com](http://www.watertogousa.com) (United States of America, Canada), [www.watertogo.eu](http://www.watertogo.eu) (United Kingdom) or [www.watertogo.shop](http://www.watertogo.shop) (most countries in the EU).



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# Visited sites

## Reserva Tapichalaca

[-4.49541, -79.13199](#)

**Visited dates:** 15-17 December 2022

Reserva Tapichalaca, and the lodge Casa Simpson ([-4.495412, -79.131992](#)), are well known with birders for the Jocotoco Antpitta. It is possible to stay at the lodge or to do a day visit (45USD p.p., for the Antpitta feeders, hummingbird feeders, trail use and breakfast). Reservations have to be made via the office of Jocotoco Foundation in Quito (via WhatsApp: +593 99 244 0038, or email: [ventas@jocotoursecuador.com](mailto:ventas@jocotoursecuador.com)). You can pay online with an administration fee + debit/credit cards fees, or pay in cash at the lodge.

We had a reservation for the 16<sup>th</sup> of December and therefor had to 'wait' one day. We birded some of the publicly accessible trails. One starts at the little shrine ([-4.49822, -79.13465](#)), but is not too great as you walk in a narrow gully most of the time. We still observed **Golden-plumed Parakeet**, **Bearded Guan** (both of which turned out to be quite common in the reserve) and many **Orange-banded Flycatchers**. Playing the tape of the latter brought in 8 individuals!



**Amethyst-throated Sunangel**



**Golden-plumed Parakeet**

We then walked the trail that is connected to the main road. Park the car next to the refugio ([-4.49108, -79.13584](#)) and walk up the path on the other side of the road. Birding was quite good still late morning, and we observed quite some mixed flocks. A flock with 5(!) **Plushcaps** going through the bamboo also contained **Rufous Wrens**. Close by **Plain-tailed Wrens** were singing and not much farther up we encountered **Rufous-crowned Tody-flycatchers** in the same bamboo patch. **Golden-crowned Tanagers** were seen in another flock. In the afternoon we walked the side trail towards the Jocotoco Antpitta feeder (going through the green gate on the right of the path). Just before the entrance we finally observed a **Black-throated Tody-tyrant**, a species we searched for already in Bolivia and Peru but never encountered. We didn't see much on the trail towards the feeder, but did

hear **Highland Tinamou**. Suddenly a **Chestnut-naped Antpitta** walked on the trail. The ranger said the Jocotoco Antpitta also does this sometimes, so you might already encounter it this way.

At the lodge there are some hummingbird feeders. These attracted **Little Sunangel** and some more common species of hummingbird. At night we heard **Rufous-banded Owl**. **White-throated Screech-owl** is heard often, but not the nights we were there. We also smelled **Striped Hog-nosed Skunk**, and according to the ranger, this creature comes to the lodge at night to eat the paint.

The next morning at 06.30 we went with ranger Franco towards the first feeder for the **Chestnut-naped Antpitta**. This feeder is about 50m from the lodge. It was raining and foggy and quite dark, but still cool to see this species up close. We waited for the rain to stop and then drove and walked to the Jocotoco Antpitta feeder. I already laid down on the floor, but ‘Panchito’ wouldn’t come. I was getting worried after 10 minutes of Franco calling, whistling and shouting “Panchito, venga, venga, venga”. I read some reviews of people missing this species, so every minute I was getting more nervous. Franco kept calling its name, walking the trails near the feeder, but no Antpitta. It almost felt like one of those kids shows.. The main character doesn’t want to come on stage, and now we have to shout together on 1-2-3 to get him to come. While I was thinking this Franco’s voice went from shouting to an amicable “venga amigo, venga, venga”. Not much later I laid eye-to-eye with a most wanted species: **Jocotoco Antpitta** (e). Panchito did what he did best; eating worms and posing well. The shyer female ‘Didi’ also showed up for 10 minutes. As Panchito was quite full and waited inside the shrubs, Franco whistled again. This time **Chestnut-naped Antpitta** showed up. It hopped closer and stole some worms before Panchito went on chasing him through the bushes. This happened a few times and was amazing to watch. We watched the total spectacle from 08.00 – 10.30, after which the Chestnut-naped finished the last worms. A great experience and amazing to see such a rare and beautiful bird up close for so long!



**Chestnut-naped Antpitta**



**Jocotoco Antpitta**

## Valladolid

[-4.54286, -79.13023](#)

At the lodge we ran into Edison Buenano, a well-known bird tour guide in Ecuador. He gave us some good tips, including one about a possible split of White-winged Brushfinch (*ssp. paynteri*). The location is just north of Valladolid. Park the car on the side of the road ([-4.54286, -79.13023](#)) and walk the roadside. We first walked down for about 700m, and then walked back up, past our car. Then Romy spotted **Paynter's Brushfinch** (e) on top of a bush at the top of the hill. This species can only be found here! We also observed **Highland Elaenia** while birding, which is a good species in Ecuador too.

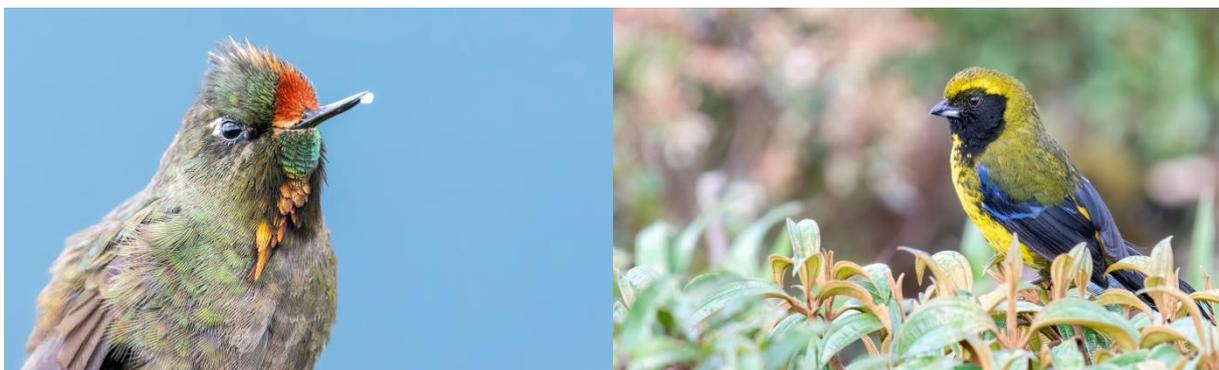
## Cerro Toledo

[-4.37465, -79.11139](#)

**Visited dates:** 17-18 December 2022

We took the turnoff just before Yangana ([-4.36861, -79.17516](#)). We were in luck when we arrived at the top of Cerro Toledo ([-4.37465, -79.11139](#)), as it was totally clear and not very windy. We first birded the low vegetation at the top and got stunning views of a male **Rainbow-bearded Thornbill**. **Many-striped Canasteros** were observed on top of some low vegetation too. **Loja Tapaculo** (a recent split from Paramo Tapaculo) started calling from a ditch and was heard multiple times that afternoon and the next morning, as was **Chusquea Tapaculo**. **Mouse-colored Thistletail** proved easy, and many were heard and seen; most easily on the top and on the other side of the ridge, after the top. This is also where we found a male **Glowing Puffleg**. A small flock came through the low shrubs there, containing **Glossy Flowerpiercer**, **Pale-naped Brushfinch**, and then suddenly I spotted multiple **Masked Mountain Tanagers!**

Very happy with all these sightings we still couldn't find the main target; Neblina Metaltail. We encountered multiple Metaltails, amongst them **Tyrian Metaltail**, but also 2 that looked more like a Viridian Metaltail than Neblina. Luckily the next morning weather was perfect and we focussed on the part before the top. This is where we had most Metaltails the day before and this turned out to be the right choice. A female was calling and attracted another male. This trick was adapted by us and soon we were surrounded by at least 4 different **Neblina Metaltails**.



**Rainbow-bearded Thornbill****Masked Mountain Tanagers**

On the way down we made some random stops. Bird activity was low, but at one stop ([-4.3844, -79.132](#)) we still heard both **Equatorial Antpitta** and a bit farther down **Slate-crowned Antpitta** (note that the sound in Merlin is somewhat different from the sound in this part of Ecuador. Better to use the Birds of Ecuador app as a reference to be sure).

## Vilcabamba

[-4.26629, -79.22663](#)

**Visited date:** 18 December 2022

We arrived in Vilcabamba around 11.00, when it was already quite hot. As we had few targets, we decided to walk the trail 'Sendero Ecológico Mandango' anyways despite the time/heat. We started walking from the parking lot ([-4.26629, -79.22663](#)) and quickly heard **Elegant Crescentchest**, which turned out to be quite common. Not much later we also heard and eventually got to see our other target; **Chapman's Antshrike**. Other birds observed were **Bay-headed Brushfinch** and **Collared Antshrike** (HO).

Some birding on the road in front of the Rumi Wilco Reserve ([-4.258427, -79.21672](#)) yielded the ssp. *alticola* of **Amazilia Hummingbird**, a possible split (sometimes already named Loja Hummingbird).

## PN Podocarpus - Bombuscaro

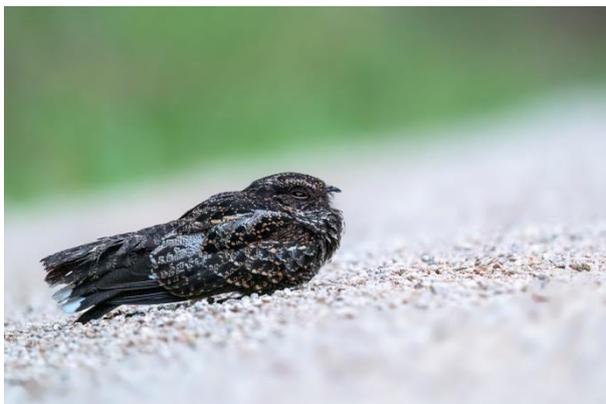
[-4.10781, -78.96398](#)

**Visited dates:** 19-23 December 2022

We drove to PN Podocarpus – Bombuscaro section and parked just before the park entrance ([-4.10781, -78.96398](#)). We camped at the parking, but one can camp in the park too. We birded the main road before the entrance the next morning. With some intermittent rain the birding wasn't bad, but not great either. The best species was **Spangled Coquette** foraging high on some flowers in the trees. We tried our luck at the Copalinga Lodge from the Jocotoco Foundation (Jocotoco asked 90USD for watching the feeders when we asked via Whatsapp... obviously just a couple of feeders aren't worth that amount). Luckily the ranger Walter was so nice to let us watch the feeders and Verbena plants for some hummers. Nothing spectacular, but we did get nice views of multiple **White-bellied Woodstars**, including a male. Walter helped us by drawing a map of the park and the road after Genairo (see next place), and we can't thank him enough! Mostly thanks to his directions we managed to see many of our target species. He knows the English bird names, and he seems to know where to go, to get your targets if you hire him for a day or 2.

Just outside the lodge (where the trail gets to the main road) we got views of female **Golden-headed Manakins**. The males are a bit further up ([-4.08996, -78.95793](#)), but we didn't get to see any despite multiple efforts over the next few days. Walter called us back to show us a **Tiny Hawk** that just flew in (and is supposed to be regular here). Walking about 100m towards the park we observed **Peruvian Warbling-antbirds**. At night we heard **Band-bellied Owl** at the lodge. About 1km from the lodge towards the park is a good spot to observe **Blackish Nightjar** ([-4.096560, -78.962097](#)). There was a landslide in the curve of the road here, and around dusk (18.30 for us) it is possible to lure the Nightjars to the ground by using playback.

The afternoon and next morning were spent walking in the park, trying mainly at the places Walter recommended. The path starts after the parking lot, climbs up a bit and then comes to a flat curve ([-4.1097, -78.9632](#)). This is the spot for **Black-billed Treehunter** (my 3000<sup>th</sup> bird species!). Walking further there is a second flat part of the trail, which is a good spot for **Coppery-chested Jacamar** (ne). The trail goes a bit down from here, and that is where we heard **Black-streaked Puffbird**. At the open part after this we observed **Lanceolated Monklet** on our way back late in the afternoon ([-4.1115, -78.9638](#)). Passing the sign about the Jacamar and the **White-necked Parakeets** (which are sometimes heard or seen flying by here) we tried for **Plain-backed Antpitta** but weren't sure if we heard it distantly or that it was our imagination (as the water made quite some noise). Before and after the bridge we tried for **Lanceolated Monklet** and **Fulvous-breasted Flatbill**, but observed neither of them. We did hear **Olive Finch** at this point ([-4.1142, -78.9648](#)). Walking up towards the area with the cabins we observed **Foothill Elaenia** in the morning. In the afternoon we had it at the last cabin (Cabin Higuerones, [-4.1143, -78.9646](#)). The area just after the cabins should be good for **Blue-rumped Manakin** and **Striolated Manakin**, but we only heard the latter on the stairs towards the waterfall Cascada la Poderosa. At the waterfall we encountered **Green-fronted Lancebills** and **White-capped Dippers**. The Mirador trail should be good for **White Hawk** and **Black-and-chestnut Hawk-eagle**, but we didn't try for those.



**Blackish Nightjar**



**White-bellied Woodstar**

After this we continued on the Sendero Higuerones. Arriving at the first stream we played the sound of **Orange-crested Flycatcher**, but only heard it here. We did observe **Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper** as

well as a **Grey-chinned Hermit**. Walking up again we encountered a lek of **Ecuadorian Piedtails** at the second corner ([-4.114877, -78.967148](#)). Even farther, as Walter already drew out for us, we heard **Yellow-breasted Antwrens**. While waiting for those to come into view, we observed 2 **Orange-crested Flycatcher**. If you don't have them here, walk to the next stream and try there.

The first 2 nights we did night walks along the main road, but spotlighting didn't yield much. We once saw a dark Opossum crossing the road, with another quickly going back into the shrubs. From what we saw it must have been an **Andean White-eared Opossum**. Another time we saw eyeshine, but couldn't make out what it was. A **Common Tapeti** hopped off to the side of the road on the second night. The last night we were too tired from all the walking to go spotlighting. Then nature decided they would send someone over. Around 21.30 we suddenly heard a loud smack against our roof top tent. I turned around and asked what Romy was doing. It turned out it wasn't Romy, but a **Kinkajou!** Walking on our roof, awning, climbing up the tent etc. Rob got out to get better looks, but the Kinkajou was not scared at all. In contrary, it followed him across the parking lot. After a few rounds of chasing him, Rob quickly climbed up the ladder into the tent. Romy closed the zipper, just in time, as the Kinkajou had made it up the stairs as well. A crazy night this was!



**Kinkajou on our car!**

## Via Genairo

[-4.0185, -78.95733](#)

With another paper full of drawings and names given by Walter, we went up the Via Genairo. Walter said there is a chain at the beginning of the road which opens at 06.30, but we didn't come across any. We parked and camped near the end of the driveable road ([-4.0185, -78.95733](#)). This is where we found most flocks during the day, including most of our targets; **Short-billed Chlorospingus**, **Ashy-throated Chlorospingus**, **Ash-browed Spinetail**, **Yellow-breasted Antwren** and a lot more! On the left side of the road is a (very) steep path going uphill. As advised we took this path and climbed up towards the open area. There we observed **Olive-chested Flycatcher** in the grass. In a flock was **Rufous-winged Tyrannulet** ([-4.0194, -78.9588](#)), quite uncommon on this side of the country. This spot and a bit further towards the left should be good for parrots. We only had a quick fly-by of a group of **White-necked Parakeets**. A nice species, but not the sighting we hoped for.

The vegetation near the more open grassy areas before the parking lot should be a good place for **Equatorial Greytail** and **Golden-winged Tody-flycatcher**, but we couldn't find either one. Walking up a bit to the next curve there is a more open area (-4.0170, -78.9570), where we observed **Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet** and got good views of **Olive Finch** (early in the morning!).

## Old Loja-Zamora Road

[-4.0341, -78.99306](#)

On the first afternoon we birded the old Loja-Zamora Road ([-4.03441, -79.00334](#)) from 14.00-16.30 but only observed a few common birds despite walking quite some distance. That must have been our least productive birding day in the whole of our world travel so far. On our last morning we decided we would give the road leading towards the Hidroeléctrica a chance. This turned out to be a great decision, as already 50m from where we parked our car ([-4.0341, -78.99306](#)) we heard 2 **Equatorial Greytails** calling. We were able to observe them, but they wouldn't come down. In the same tree was a **Grey-mantled Wren**. From there we walked up towards the gate and then back to the car again. We were very happy to get better looks at a flock of 4 **White-necked Parakeets**, flying from tree to tree, surprisingly without making much noise. We were able to observe **White-crowned Tapaculo**, **Blackish Antbirds** and **Wattled Guans** (HO).



Ecuadorian Tyrannulet



Equatorial Greytail record shot

## Reserva Maycu/Via Nuevo Paraiso [-4.24871, -78.65964](#)

**Visited dates:** 23-25 December 2022

Reserva Maycu is located in the southeast of the country and is best known for the localized Orange-throated Tanager. As there is quite some traffic on the road going through the forest, and no good places to camp, we decided to camp at the Cabañas Yankuam ([-4.24871, -78.65964](#)). There we were welcomed by Carlos and Clarita. They are very nice and warm people, and for a very decent price (5USD p.p.p.n.) we were allowed to camp, use facilities like the bathroom and a kitchen. On top of

that they gave us breakfast twice and invited us for dinner with Christmas Eve. The birding takes place about 4.5km from the lodge, but they are planning to build a cabin in that forest in the future.

We mainly birded the road through the reserve, parking the car ([-4.272288, -78.640657](#)) and walking both ways (south comes to more open land sooner than going north). This way we already encountered a flock of **Orange-throated Tanagers** the first afternoon! Carlos says about 90% of the visitors see it on their first day. We didn't encounter any the next two mornings, but only 1 morning was fully focussed on the forest area. Other good species we observed here are **Golden-winged Tody-flycatcher** (in a more open area), multiple **Black-and-White Tody-flycatchers**, **Grey-tailed Piha** (HO), **Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater** (HO), **Chestnut-headed Crake** (HO) and **Purplish Jacamars**. A **Black-throated Brilliant** flew by and was lured back with playback. Birds that can be observed here but that we missed are **Foothill Schiffornis**, **White-browed Purpletuft**, **Fiery-throated Fruiteater** and **Roraiman Flycatcher**. At night we heard **Band-bellied Owl** along the road and observed 1 at the pineapple grove (start trail: [-4.261536, -78.646131](#), and take the first right). **Foothill Screech-owl** has been observed as well here, but not by us.

We were surprised by the amount of heavy traffic, and 50% of the people passing by greet you by honking. We only learned of the entrance to the trail towards the Tepui plateau on our last day. The entrance should be left of the second sign of the Orange-throated Tanagers ([-4.264656, -78.644527](#)). Carlos said that a guide is officially needed and that the path opens up once you're inside the forest. The walk up to the Tepui should take about 2 hours one way.

We birded along the main road in Peru for half an hour and got very nice views of a **Chestnut-headed Crake** running in an open patch we made on the side of the road ([-4.3139, -78.6442](#)).

The road to and from Reserva Mayca is good for species like **Black-billed Seed Finch** (close to Paquisha: [-3.9364, -78.6992](#) & [-3.9402, -78.6937](#) and closer to the lodge [-4.2062, -78.6413](#)), but also **Blackish Rail**, **Chestnut-bellied Seedeater**, **Black-and-white Seedeater** and other grassland species.



**Band-bellied Owl**



**Orange-throated Tanager**

## Paquisha - Santa Cecilia trail

[-3.91876, -78.61443](#)

Visited dates: 25-27 December 2022

We drove through Paquisha and followed maps.me up the road towards our camping spot (-3.91876, -78.614432) around 1820m. By driving there you will pass one cattle gate, which you can open and close (it's meant to keep cattle in, not people out). The habitat below the gate is already interesting, and there we found **Lemon-browed Flycatchers**. The main target for us was the Prickletail, which can be seen in mixed flocks. We walked the road 2 mornings and 2 afternoons; 2 afternoons until the top (around 1870m) and two mornings until the end of the road (currently at [-3.926438, -78.606676](#) at 1750m). **White-bellied Antpitta** and **Long-tailed Tapaculo** were heard often in the early mornings. We heard **Black-chested Fruiteater** quite often and managed to see it once (mostly around [-3.9209, -78.6128](#)). Mixed flocks had quite some species in them, amongst which **Flammulated Treehunter**, **Ash-browed Spinetail**, **Rufous-crested Tanager** and **Pale-edged Flycatcher**, but no Prickletails. Other good birds we encountered along the road while searching for flocks were **Chestnut-bellied Thrush**, **Yellow-vented Woodpecker** and **Tawny-breasted Hermit**. We also observed quite a fair amount of **Amazon Dwarf Squirrels**, which were a real treat!



**Spectacled Prickletail at its nest**

**Amazon Dwarf Squirrel**

A bit afraid we wouldn't find the Prickletail we were back at the car after the first afternoon and first morning. While sheltering in our tent against the rain we heard a mixed flock passing by and decided to get out. It didn't take long before we had 3 **Spectacled Prickletails** in clear view! Then we saw they were constructing a nest at the end of a hanging branch in a big tree, about 20m above the ground. The nest was constructed by (a bit surprisingly) all 3 individuals. It was made mostly out of moss and some grass-like vegetation, build around the small leaves that were still on the hanging branch. Building was done quite rapidly, with most of the time another Prickletail already arriving before another left to search for more material. They would spend 5-10 seconds, mostly on top of the nest before going off. Sometimes a Prickletail would go from an opening at the top through the sphere of moss, presumably to keep an area open in the middle. I suspect it will end up being a sphere or oval shaped nest. One other similar structure was hanging on another branch about 2m from this nest.

Maybe they use the same tree multiple years after another, but built a different nest? During the time the prickletails were building, the mixed flock was present. As soon as the mixed flock left the Prickletails left too. We saw them again an hour after. Right away when the flock arrived the Prickletails started building the nest again for about 5 minutes before the flock left again.

Clearly it is still possible to see Prickletails at this site, but there has been a lot of destruction from road works and we only encountered the Prickletails in one of the flocks (in contrast to Andrew Spencer who recorded at least one in every flock in 2011). Another option might be to go towards Reserva Zarza ([-3.849525, -78.541818](#)).

We spotlighted at night and heard both **Cinnamon Screech-owl** as well as **Rufescent Screech-owl**. With the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V heat scope we found a hummingbird resting on a bamboo branch, which turned out to be an **Emerald-bellied Puffleg**! In a bamboo patch near the car we found a slender, long and light-coloured Opossum with a naked tail going through the bamboo, but we didn't manage to get a photo and couldn't find enough information on altitude/distribution to ID it.

## Mi Paradise

[-3.83271, -78.7728](#)

**Visited date:** 27 December 2022

We visited Mi Paradise in the middle of the day. When arriving at the location given on GoogleMaps, we were surprised that the person living in the house directed us to a vague location 5km up the hill. We decided to leave the car there (-3.83164, -78.77565) and check some eBird-lists and ended up along the main road (-3.83271, -78.7728). There we ran into a gate, and it turned out that the owner Christian Romero doesn't live here. Contact him beforehand to make a reservation (via WhatsApp: +593 99 236 5282).



Spangled Coquette



Spangled Coquette & Wire-crested Thorntail

The garden has many Verbena plants and is a guaranteed spot for **Spangled Coquette**, of which we saw multiple. Other hummers observed during our short visit are **Wire-crested Thorntail**, **Little Woodstar**, **Amazilia Hummingbird**, **Blue-tailed Emerald**, **Golden-tailed Sapphire** and **Lesser Violetear**.

## Gerano Lodge

[-1.01329, -77.42041](#)

**Visited dates:** 2-4 January 2023

We read about Gerano Lodge in another trip report and it seemed like a good alternative to the more expensive lowland birding lodges in the Amazon, with good species like Fiery Topaz and Rufous Potoo pinned down. We contacted the owner Sandro (+593 99 425 3125) and he responded quickly, in English, and said we could camp at his place for 40USD a night in our car and use all the trails. Just before arriving he mentioned he moved the lodge 10 minutes north (due to the local indigenous Guarani people asking many papers and money for every foreigner coming). There is a barrier just in front of the lodge, where you have to mention you go to Sandro/Gerano Lodge. We arrived to find out we had to park and camp on the public street, which sees quite some traffic. The lodge itself is nothing more than some wooden cabins, and it's a pity he didn't take the chance to make something from it (others reported that the old lodge at the other location was really run down). So now you would stay in a very, very basic room, far away from where the good birding takes place.

We hired Sandro as a guide for the next day (80USD per day) and left at 06.00 to the spot where **Fiery Topaz** should occur. Sandro screamed a few times that the Topaz was flying by, but the silhouettes of those birds didn't look anything like a Topaz, let alone a hummingbird. Luckily he did hear a **Wing-banded Wren** in the shrubs and we got very nice views of one individual almost crawling alongside the speaker on the forest floor. He also correctly differentiated the sound of **Yellow-browed Antbird** from **Peruvian Warbling Antbird** and we got good views of the former in the forest. From the main road we managed to see **Scale-breasted Woodpecker**. Already before 07.00 a motorcycle with some locals came by, and suddenly we had to pay a 20USD p.p. community fee. For this they should clean the trails (the trails are their property, not from Gerano). However, the trails were really overgrown, with many fallen logs, spines etc. We would suggest not paying until you walked the trails and know they are good.

We walked the trails quite far into the forest and got nice views of **Golden-headed Manakin**, **Blue-crowned Manakin** and **Blue-backed Manakin**. We also got views of **Spot-winged Antbird** and a **Dusky-throated Antshrike**. During the day we noticed that Sandro doesn't know all his species (many Flycatchers, Foliage-gleaners etc.) and also misidentifies a whole other bunch. This made me make photos and recordings of everything and that showed even more that he was wrong quite often on the ID. His pronunciation of the English names is quite bad to express it mildly, and often we had to

guess from the sounds which species he meant. Explaining in Spanish where he observed a species was even worse (“below that green leaf”, standing in the middle of the forest).

In vain we hoped he would have some reliable spots for species like *Brown Nunlet*, *Yellow-billed Jacamar* and *Yellow-billed Nunbird*, which can all be seen here. In the afternoon we found *Sooty Antshrike* and heard *White-cheeked Antshrike* as only interesting species. The *Rufous Potoo* was not at its roost and also the two locations where they are supposed to come at night didn't work out. So far for 'pinned down'. We did hear multiple *Nocturnal Curassows*! Overall we did see some nice species, but it was quite disappointing species-wise and abundance-wise for lowland birding with a local guide. We wouldn't recommend going here based on our experience.

## Nukanchi Llakta towards Santa Rosa

[-0.99209, -77.43926](#)

We did some birding in the open country between Nukanchi ([-0.992099, -77.439266](#)) and Santa Rosa ([-0.97801, -77.45042](#), turning left there). Along this road we observed multiple nice species like *Pearl Kite*, *Scarlet-crowned Barbet*, *White-cheeked Jacamar* (up to 8 on the electricity wires in the morning!) and also a group of *Red-mantled Saddle-backed Tamarins*. We hoped to see *Horned Screamers* (look for them in the grassy marsh) or *Large-billed Seed Finches*, but found neither. We did find *Riparian Parrotlets* on the road going left just before Santa Rosa, which were breeding inside an electricity pole.



Riparian Parrotlet



Red-mantled Saddle-backed Tamarin

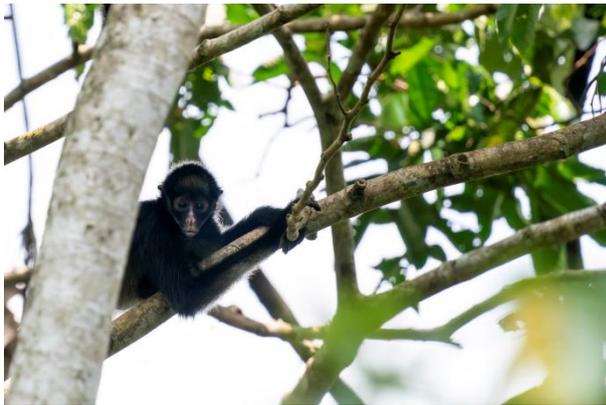
## Puerto Misahuallí

[-1.04801, -77.6666](#)

Visited date: 4 January 2023

On our way back to Tena we made a short stop in Puerto Misahuallí and went on a 1.5h canoe ride at Laguna Kawana Reserva with the uncle of Sandro (which joined too). We paid 5USD p.p. for the canoe ride. The canoe is quite stable and it's perfectly safe to take camera equipment with you. We came here because Sandro said that Sungrebe was 100% guaranteed. And it turned out he was right,

as we saw 3 **Sungrebes** in total! Sandro also said that observing primates was easy here. After an hour of going around the island we were starting to doubt this, until they spotted a **Common Woolly Monkey**! To get better views of it we went on the island and before arriving we spotted a group of **Red-mantled Saddle-backed Tamarins**. It turned out the Woolly Monkey wasn't alone and there were 2 more of them in the Cecropia trees. After watching them for a while Sandro suddenly shouted that there was a **White-bellied Spider Monkey** coming our way. That one was swinging through the canopy, and followed by... a **Marañon Capuchin Monkey**.... And that one by an **Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkey**! It felt like a complete zoo, with such an amount of primate species on a small island. Sandro said that these primates cross when Cecropia trees from the other side fall against other trees on the island, thus making a bridge. He says the primates get locked up on the island when that tree falls down totally. Every now and then another tree falls and individuals get off the island again and others get on. There is another lake closer to Puerto Misahuallí where they feed **Lowland Pacas** at night, but as we wanted to continue our route and found the price a bit steep (15USD p.p. for an 80% chance) we didn't try that one. But for us this stop was definitely worth it, even in the midst of the day! You can reserve via WhatsApp (+593 98 727 3747 / +593 99 903 8542) or just show up.



**White-bellied Spider Monkey**



**Common Woolly Monkey**

## San Isidro

[-0.58999, -77.88235](#)

### San Isidro Lodge

[-0.58999, -77.88235](#)

**Visited dates:** 5-6 January 2023

We didn't reserve for the lodge and didn't read about them allowing day visitors in other trip reports. We decided to take our chances and asked if we could stay in our motorhome on their terrain and search for the Owl, Night Monkeys and the Antpitta. After a firm "no, we never do that, not even day visitors", we asked to speak to the owners. We then threw in a few "por favors" and in the end we were allowed to camp on the parking lot near the gate for 1 night for 20USD p.p. Still steep for eating your own food and sleeping in your own car, but a fraction of the price of staying here, so we were happy they allowed us to stay for one night! And it paid off!

Guido, the manager, said the Monkeys should emerge on the concrete path between the restaurant and the cabins around 18.30. So we waited, staked the place out, and then decided to walk loops via the cabins (especially cabins 10/11 where they supposedly sleep during the day), back on the parallel path to the restaurant and back again to the concrete path. We did this for half an hour and still no Monkeys. Then Guido came up to tell us that **Mountain Tapir** came to the salt block they put out in front of the restaurant! We ran over there and got very nice views of a female. They don't have good lights on there, so bring your flashlight (the animal didn't respond to it at all). After some time we went searching for the Monkeys again, but found nothing. The night was perfect without any wind (but with a bright moon) so we were able to hear any rustling sounds. We then heard and later observed **San Isidro Owl** (thus far considered a race of **Black-banded Owl**) at the parking lot near the cabins. We walked the whole terrain from the gate to the restaurant, the cabins etc., but no Monkeys. Those were supposed to be a piece of cake here! We then hiked the Tapir Trail (starting at the restaurant). As it was super slippery it was hard to scan every tree, but we did find **Andean White-eared Opossum** somewhere halfway. Not much later we heard some rustling and waited. Small berries began to drop and we knew there was something in there. Not much later we got nice views of at least 4 **Lemurine Night Monkeys/Colombian Night Monkeys** high up in a fruiting tree! We smelled **Striped Hog-nosed Skunks** many times, but never saw them.



**Mountain Tapir**



**Andean White-eared Opossum**

The next morning we were on the deck at the restaurant at 06.00. They have a moth trap beneath the deck (which sometimes attracts the San Isidro Owl at night). The moth trap attracts a big feeding party of birds in the morning between 06.00-07.30. Easy birding with a cup of coffee in your hand, seeing most birds from very close up; a very enjoyable experience!! It started simple with **Inca Jays**, but quickly **Olive-backed Woodcreeper**, **Montane Woodcreeper** and **Strong-billed Woodcreeper** showed up. Besides those, many Warblers, Vireos and Flycatchers showed up, including **White-tailed Tyrannulet**, **Pale-edged Flycatcher**, **Variegated Bristle Tyrant** and **Black-billed Peppershrike**. The hummingbird feeders didn't attract too many species, but included a new species for us: **Buff-tailed Coronet**.

At 07.30 the **White-bellied Antpitta** is fed at the beginning of the Tapir Trail. Unfortunately it was very dark, with lots of vegetation above it. Taking pictures was incredibly difficult (I asked them to remove some of the huge leaves blocking most of the light for the next photographers, so you might want to check the feeder already the afternoon before). A pair of **Rufous-crowned Tody-flycatchers** was present in the bamboo below the feeders at the restaurant. A **Black Agouti** came up to the corn feeder.



**Masked Trogon male**



**Golden-bellied Flycatcher**

In the afternoon we birded the roadside around a place where others had found Andean Potoo at night. The birding wasn't very eventful, but we still observed **Golden-collared Honeycreeper**, **Black-capped Tanager** and **Handsome Flycatcher**. Walking back to our car Romy noticed an interesting shape, which turned out to be the **Andean Potoo**! At night there were even 2 present at the same spot (an adult feeding the juvenile), and we found it again on the same branch the morning after. We observed it from the road ([-0.593599, -77.887521](#)), looking towards the west (close to a high Palm tree) it was sitting on a small protruding branch in an open window!



**Andean Potoo**



**Rufous-crowned Flycatcher**

We went spotlighting along the road, both around the Potoo spot as well as the first 2km from the main road, as others had seen Night Monkeys there too. We saw and heard nothing unfortunately. We ran into Guido from the lodge, who told us that there were now 2 **Mountain Tapirs** at the lodge.

We took this as an invitation to go there again and watched them for a long time!:) The **San Isidro Owl** was calling at the entrance gate this time.

In the morning we heard quite some **Streak-headed Antbirds** and **Rufous-crowned Tody-flycatchers** in the bamboo along the road. We heard **Black-chested Fruiteater** ([-77.888428, -0.596299](#)) and were able to find 1 female **Golden-rumped Euphonia**. Unfortunately we couldn't find **Chesnut-breasted Chlorophonia**.

## Cordillera de los Guacamayos

[-0.623604, -77.840176](#)

**Visited dates:** 4-8 January & 6 and 8 June 2023

This famous trail starts at the right side of the big parking lot with the Maria Chapel on it. We birded this trail the mornings of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of January. On the 5<sup>th</sup> we had super dense fog until 08.00, and then rain from 09.30 for the rest of the morning. The 8<sup>th</sup> was considerably better with just a slight overcast and only fog from 11.30. This made a huge difference in the birding experience, as the first morning we were barely able to identify anything by sight. Birds couldn't be seen at all, or were mere silhouettes. There is a lot to be seen on the trail, and a guide would have been welcome (especially our first morning) as there were so many birds calling. The guide in the region would be Marcelo Quipo (+593 99 286 8478), but he is nowadays doing bird trips all over the country, so he was out on a birding trip during our time here.

We slept in our car in the parking lot and hoped to observe **San Isidro Owl** here. There was just too much traffic the whole night to hear anything, even in the morning at 05.00. We seriously couldn't understand how others found the Owl here, until on the second night we saw a **Black-banded Owl/San Isidro Owl** hawking moths near the street lanterns right behind the chapel. We also observed **Rufous-bellied Nighthawk** in the morning above the open patch behind the chapel. About 250m into the trail we found a pair of **White-throated Screech-owls** on the second night.

Both days on the trail we walked the 3.75km until the pipeline ([-0.6417, -77.837](#)) which took about 4-5h and 1.5-2h going back. Rubber boots are recommended. The trail is a bit uneven but pretty good. Only on the way back we realised how much the trail actually descended. The first kilometre of the trail should be good for **Greater Scythebill**, and this location is one of the few places where it is regularly seen. Unfortunately we couldn't find it. We did find **Powerful Woodpecker**, **Black-billed Mountain-toucan**, **Dusky Piha** (HO), **Olivaceous Piha**, **Golden-headed Quetzals** and many **Green-and-black Fruiteaters**. A juvenile **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta** was present on the path and walked about 2m in front of us every time we were around the 500m stone marker. The bamboo patches within the first km are good for species like **Streak-headed Antbird**, **Rufous-crowned Tody-flycatcher**, but also try for **Slate-crowned Antpitta** and **Ocellated Tapaculo**. The latter we heard down in the valley at the first large bamboo patch ([-0.624736, -77.841423](#)). We managed to get good

views in some dense shrubs of this awesome species (-0.627551, -77.841682). This is also where we heard **Moustached Antpitta**. In/near two other small bamboo patches we found **Geoffroy's Daggerbill** on both mornings (-0.626006, -77.842255) and **Rufous-headed Pygmy-tyrants** (-0.630027, -77.841988) on the first morning. In an open bend of the trail we heard **White-faced Nunbirds** calling from far below in the valley (-0.636410, -77.840797), but we couldn't get them to come closer.

We tried for **Peruvian Antpitta** at the known stake-outs (-0.635781, -77.840044 and -0.639541, -77.839316). We didn't get a response at the first and it already started raining the first morning before the second stake-out. We waited for the rain to get a bit less heavy, walked till the end of the trail and tried again on our way back. Then at the second stake-out we heard a soft whistle and then shortly saw the Antpitta sitting on a branch below the path! What an amazing little bird! It was at the first stake-out we got to see **Bicolored Antvireo** the first morning. We observed **Common Woolly Monkeys** going parallel to the trail one morning. We also saw **Red-tailed Squirrel** along the trail, but unfortunately no **Andean Bear**, like some birders reported in their eBird list!

We came back to this trail both the afternoon of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2023. Our main goal was to finally see **Greater Scythebill**, and therefore we only focussed on the first kilometre. Unfortunately both visits (our 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> daytime visit here), we couldn't locate it.



Ocellated Tapaculo



San Isidro Owl

## Ruta 45 – Roadside Quarry

[-0.65749, -77.78785](#)

Visited dates: 7-8 June 2023

There is a roadside quarry on the east side of Ruta 45. You can drive onto it and park (and camp) there. This location is a bit lower than the Cordillera de los Guacamayos, and therefore interesting for some different species. The afternoon of the 7<sup>th</sup> we had clear skies, but no flocks came close by. We did see many Tanager species perched far away on the top of trees (scope needed), including **Golden-eared Tanager**, **Guira Tanager**, **Blue-browed Tanager**, **Black-capped Tanager** and lots more.

The skies were perfect for *White-chested Swift* or *Solitary Eagle* (which are seen around here), but we didn't have that luck.

The next morning it was really foggy and raining, so we sat on the back of our car with the hood open. A big flock passed by, and in this flock we had *Golden-eared Tanager*. *Vermilion Tanagers* often go with these mixed flocks too, but not this time.

## Wildsumaco Lodge

[-0.6756, -77.6012](#)

**Visited dates:** 8-11 January 2023

On the way to Wildsumaco we made a quick stop ([-0.712396, -77.740410](#)). Here we observed *Cliff Flycatcher* on the cliff at the roadside. *Orange-breasted Falcon* is sometimes seen sitting on the treetops in the valley behind the parking spot. We observed it flying over a bit farther up the road.

We made a stop at the Cascada Hollín, which has a hummingbird garden ([-0.69523, -77.73069](#)). There we were able to observe *Green-backed Hillstar* fairly easily, as well as some other species like *Black-throated Brilliant* and *Black-throated Mango*. The entrance fee is 3USD p.p.

We contacted Wildsumaco via the website prior to our arrival, but never got a response. We drove up and asked if we could bird the trails. Other birders paid 20USD p.p. for this, or even negotiated it down to 60USD for 5 days. They told us that 20USD is the price when there are no other tourists, and that it would be 40USD p.p. to use the trails. In the end it went down to 25USD, but still really expensive for just the use of the trails... The fee for birding guide Byron (working here for 6 years now) was 120USD for a full day, 80USD for half a day. That included the use of the trails, so for us that was the logic thing to do. We saw most of our realistic targets within 1.5 days with him.

### Lodge Area ([-0.6756, -77.6012](#))

The lodge itself is really nice and seems like a great place to stay! There is a deck with hummingbird feeders and flowering plants, which attracted *Golden-tailed Sapphire*, *Sparkling Violetear*, *Brown Violetear*, *Wire-crested Thorntail*, *Violet-headed Hummingbird* and a few times *Ecuadorian Piedtail*, *Black-throated Brilliant* and once a *Napo Sabrewing* showed up.

North of the lodge there are two moth traps, one close to the lodge and one a bit further into the forest. These attracted *Black-streaked Puffbird*, *Black-faced Antbird*, *Western Fire-eye* and some other birds. *White-chested Puffbird* apparently also shows up sometimes at the moth traps, but not when we were there.

One time a group of five *Black-mantled Tamarins/Graells's Tamarins* came by the lodge. At dusk we observed *Sickle-winged Guans* in the Cecropia trees at the deck. At night we observed *Band-bellied*

**Owls** right at the lodge. Near the gate we found **Tropical Screech-owls**, a presumed **Bicolored Arboreal Rice Rat** in the shrubs and an **Eastern Lowland Olingo** in a tree.



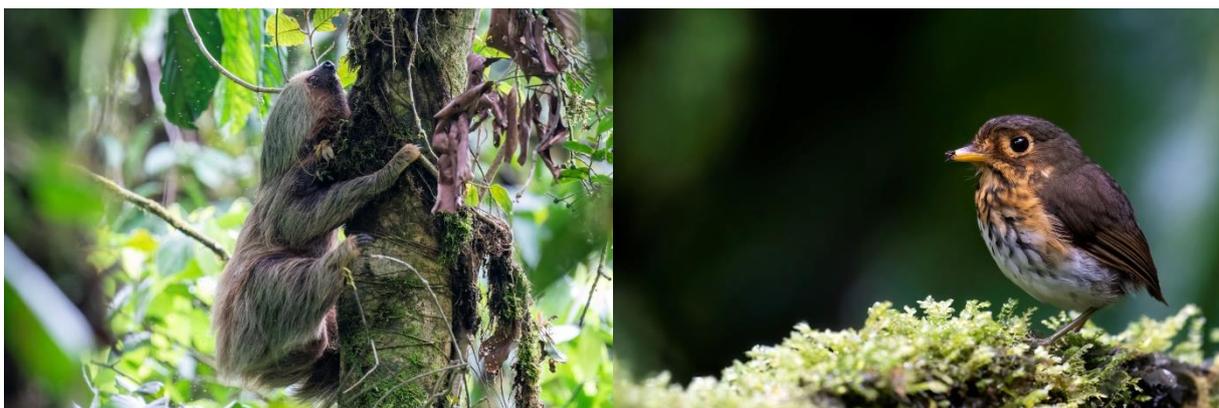
**Black-streaked Puffbird**

**Black-mantled Tamarin**

**Piha Trail (-0.6856, -77.6014) -> Manakin trail -> Waterfall trail (-0.6845, -77.6005)**

The first morning with Byron we quickly drove to the Waterfall Trail, parked our car and walked to the entrance of the Piha Trail. Right in front of the entrance is where we heard **Buckley's Forest Falcon**. Byron had even seen a chick a week before, but this time we didn't even manage to see the adult. While trying to get views of the Falcon we heard **Wing-banded Wren** and **Ornate Stipplethroat**. Around 07.00 we entered the trail system and took an immediate left to the Manakin trail. Right at the start is where we observed **Blue-rumped Manakin**.

The next couple of 100 meters were full of new species, including **Spot-backed Antbird**, **Rufous-tailed Foliage-gleaner** (which was observed multiple times that day) and the best ones: **Grey-tailed Piha**, **Yellow-throated Spadebill** (-0.6869, -77.5994) and **Chestnut-crowned Gnateater** (-0.6873, -77.5991). Along this first part is where Byron has observed **Black Tinamou** and **Sapphire Quail-dove**, but we failed to hear or see them.



**Linnaeus's Two-toed Sloth**

**Ochre-breasted Antpitta**

Byron heard **Brown Nunlet** and we were even able to get decent views of this shy bird! He had two spots for **Green Manakin**. We heard it at the first (-0.689255, -77.597992), alongside with **Musician Wren**, and actually observed it at the second (-0.68657, -77.59826). Going up the very steep steps at the end of the Waterfall trail we observed **Orange-crested Flycatchers**. Other nice birds we came

across during this morning were **Spot-winged Antbird**, **Foothill Elaenia**, **Foothill Stipplethroat/Foothill Antwren**, **Olive Finch**, **Black-and-white Tody-flycatcher** and **Plain-winged Antwren** (in a flock). Romy also found **Linnaeus's Two-toed Sloth**, the first one ever in the reserve for Byron!

#### Face trail ([-0.6796, -77.6007](#))

The very first afternoon we explored this trail alone and had a **Tayra** crossing the path after some heavy rains around 17.00. The first afternoon with Byron, we walked the Face trail from 15.00-18.00. Here too we found **Yellow-throated Spadebill** (-0.6814, -77.5976), but other birds were less cooperative. Some flocks really high up in the canopy gave **Russet Antshrike**, **Rufous-rumped Antwren** and **Buff-throated Tody-tyrant**, but views were all quite bad. **White-crowned Manakins** were active near the southern turn-off towards the Lanisoma trail (-0.6833, -77.5965). At a bamboo patch at the beginning of this southern entrance we heard **Dusky Spinetail** and saw a **Musician Wren**. A bit farther into the trail we observed **Many-banded Aracari**, and more or less halfway we finally found **White-streaked Antvireo** (-0.683095, -77.594902). Back on the Face Loop we heard **Buckley's Forest Falcon** again far away. Byron spotted a male **Fiery-throated Fruiteater** high up in the trees.

#### Coopman's trail/Antpitta trail ([-0.67577, -77.59996](#))

This trail is close by the lodge. We walked this trail the 2<sup>nd</sup> morning with Byron in the rain and only got one flock that included some nice species like **Orange-eared Tanager**, **Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet** and **Wing-barred Piprites**. A little side trail takes you to the Antpitta feeders, which are within 10 minutes walking from the lodge (gathering at the lodge at 07.00 and 15.00: [-0.677472, -77.598282](#)). **Ochre-breasted Antpitta**, **Plain-backed Antpitta** and **White-crowned Tapaculo** came to feed.



**Band-bellied Owl**



**Plain-backed Antpitta**

Walking a bit further along the trail we quickly had our best encounter with a male **Fiery-throated Fruiteater** at eye-level! Byron took us far into the forest after he heard a sound. Only after lots of stealth walking and careful listening we finally observed **White-chested Puffbird**. The hummingbird

feeders near the biological station ([-0.671774, -77.598412](#)) is where we got longer views of **Napo Sabrewing**. This spot should also be better for *Rufous-vented Whitetip*.

## Comunidad Avila

[-0.62009, -77.41867](#)

We didn't visit this place, but I did want to include some information about it. Close to Loreto there is a community called 'Avila'. There is a *Harpy Eagle* nest here and this can be visited with a guide for 50USD p.p. To arrange a visit you have to contact Omar Shiguanho (+593 98 622 2113 or +593 99 604 3935) via WhatsApp in Spanish. You will get one or two guides to accompany you for the 45 minute walk towards the nest (somewhere around -0.6058, -77.41577). During our time in Ecuador, there was only a chick on the nest and the adults were rarely observed by birders going there, even if they spent the whole day at the nest site. As there was a cheaper option near Limoncocha (see below in the trip report) and it was possible to see an adult there, we decided to skip this location. However, it might be worth it on a vacation if you're not going to the Napo River ☺

## Bigal River Biological Reserve

[-0.53727, -77.42498](#)

**Visited dates:** 13 January & 7 June 2023

The Bigal River Biological Reserve is *the* place for the very rare Pink-throated Brilliant. Therefore we were very keen on visiting this reserve. However, we couldn't find much info about it and it turned out we had the wrong number. After driving a random road to the end, speaking to locals who gave us a number, driving to an office in Loreto, speaking to people from a private conservancy, we finally got the number from Thierry Garcia (+593 98 930 6988 / [sumacmuyu@gmail.com](mailto:sumacmuyu@gmail.com) / [the website](#)). Thierry is the founder and manager of Bigal River Biological Reserve, with a total of 1500ha. This reserve is situated next to another 3000ha private reserve: Rio Bigai Reserve (from the Randers Regnskov Zoo in Denmark). Almost all of this is primary foothill forest at an altitude of around 1000m. This makes it very interesting for many highly sought after species of lower and higher altitudes!

We pretty much reserved 1 minute before we were ready to go and we were afraid this was too short of a notice. Luckily Thierry was so friendly to invite us to visit the reserve for a day. The reserve is reached via a pebble-paved road north of Loreto ([-0.622148, -77.304707](#)), all the way until the end of the paved road ([-0.5551, -77.417926](#)). There is no safe parking, so it is best to park it securely in Loreto at hotel Hosteria Hojo de Agua (2USD p.d., contact Fernanda +593 939 022 337) and take a taxi to the reserve (20USD one way with Ramiro Alvarez +593 982 503 588). From there you have to walk for about 30 minutes until the primary forest begins, and another 15 minutes until the lodge ([0.537275, -77.424988](#)). Wear rubber boots, as this habitat is known as 'very wet foothill forest' and

the forest floor can get quite muddy. As we had only one day we decided to start walking at 05.15 in the morning. The Brilliant normally comes to the hummingbird feeders, but unfortunately they had been taken down the week before (because of the absence of rangers to be able to fill them). Therefore we focussed on the broad main trail in the forest and hoped to come across the Brilliant on a patch of flowers. We observed **Blue-throated Piping-guan** (HO), **Ecuadorian Piedtail**, **Fasciated Antshrike**, **Musician Wren** (HO) and had 2 **Salvin's Curassows** crossing the path! As we couldn't find the Brilliant or many flowers along the main trail we went to the lookout on the way to the lodge. Across the lookout, on the other side of the path, there were some flowering trees. We observed hummingbird activity there so we decided to stake that out. This way we observed **Napo Sabrewing**, **Green Hermit**, **Black-throated Brilliant** and some other hummingbird species. Another smaller and dark looking Brilliant sat with its back to us, and it looked promising. I was able to take some pictures while it flicked its wings, and this way it turned out it was in fact a **Pink-throated Brilliant**! Not the best sighting, but we were happy to see such a rare hummer! Two **Blackish Pewees** were hawking from a dead tree, and an **Amazonian Umbrellabird** kept passing by while we were there. We walked a small round and heard another Curassow and **Grey-winged Trumpeters**! During this walk we observed **Northern Amazon Red Squirrel**.



**Orange-breasted Falcon**



**Salvin's Curassow**

We walked back to our car and in the open patch we observed **Orange-breasted Falcon** perched in a dead tree. A pretty good morning with some very rare species. A very promising site that would definitely warrant at least 2-3 nights to fully explore it and search for species like **Sapphire Quail-dove**, **Nocturnal Curassow**, **Foothill Screech-owl** or maybe even the rare **Red-winged Wood-Rail**! With such good forest, mammalwatching should be great too. **Lowland Paca** and **Black-eared Opossum** supposedly come to the feeder at the lodge most days. Camera traps have seen incredible wildlife, including **Giant Armadillo**! We might just go back next year to search for that one 😊

We actually managed to go back to this reserve on June 7<sup>th</sup> (4.5 months later after everything written above). It had rained a lot and the forest was way muddier than in January. The forest was also way quieter. This time we did get great views of a male **Pink-throated Brilliant** on the feeders! In flocks we found **Moustached Antwren** and **Speckled Spinetails**, the latter not being an easy bird to see

normally at other places. The **Blackish Pewees** were at the exact same perch on the left side, seen from the lookout. Photographing all the swifts flying in the air on our way back we finally picked out a **White-chinned Swift**, besides **White-collared Swifts**, **Chestnut-collared Swifts** and **Short-tailed Swifts**.

## Napo River / Limoncocha

[-0.49016, -76.33386](#)

**Visited dates:** 17-23 January 2023

We really wanted to visit the Ecuadorian Amazon, as so many awesome birds and mammals can be found that are hard or impossible to see elsewhere. However, lodges along the Napo River are very expensive and far out of our budgetary reach. Sani Lodge is well known with birders, and was written down by other birders as a 'budget lodge', but it was far from that. Even for a 4n/5d (which is practically only 3.5 days of actually being around the lodge) we were quoted around 2500€ for the two of us. While preparing we noticed some photos on social media of a friend with many of the targets we had for this region. They had arranged it in the city of Limoncocha and went with a local guide to Saní and Yanusí. That sounded like a great plan, so we quickly contacted Pablo Hualinga (+593 98 997 9943) via WhatsApp (Spanish only). He has pretty decent wooden cabañas on his property: Cabañas Antpitta (-0.40652, -76.62396). We agreed that we would bring our own food, sleep in our car on the parking lot and hire him only as a guide (100USD per day). He was friendly and texted regularly "Como estás?", which often caused us stress as we thought he texted to cancel for some reason (but he didn't). Side note: we heard from many people that he is charging ridiculous amounts of money for guiding now.

### Limoncocha and surroundings

We arrived the 17<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon and were able to talk and make a plan. We had sent him a list of our targets for these 6 days, and as expected with such a biodiverse lowland location the list was quite long. He wasn't frightened at all by the list, which is always a good sign. We had quite some nocturnal mammals on the wish list as well, so we decided to start right away that night. We drove towards a nice forested road (-0.395302, -76.626278) where we waited in a forested patch until dark. There we heard **Black-spotted Bare-eye** and **Slate-colored Hawk**. After a while we heard **Zigzag Heron**, and not much later we were able to observe a pair of them! Some spotlighting produced **Eastern Lowland Olingo** and **Great Potoo**.

The next morning we went out at 06.00 and drove to a bridge (-0.365153, -76.586931). Here **Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys** were very common and along the same road we observed **Red-crowned Titi Monkey**. At the bridge we observed **Brown Jacamars**, **Cream-colored Woodpecker** and **Long-billed Woodcreeper**. We then took a trail on the south side of the road, a bit west of the bridge. Unfortunately we missed a **Green Acouchi** crossing the path as Pablo walked way too fast and

far before us. It took quite some walking before we got to the stake-out. During the walk we encountered **Black-mantled Tamarins** (common too in the surroundings) and **Colombian Red Howler**. At the stake-out it took some time, but after an hour or so we were finally able to observe **Chestnut-belted Gnateater**. Not much later we observed **Wire-tailed Manakin** at a stake-out nearby. The walk back only yielded **Dusky-throated Antshrike** and **Plain-throated Antwren**.



**Red-crowned Titi**

**Zigzag Herons**

We then went to a location where we would try for **Cocha Antshrike**. Unfortunately (and this turned out to be a recurrent theme), Pablo didn't arrange anything before. So after driving there and walking an annoying long swampy path, it turned out there was no canoe ready. The owner didn't feel like putting it there right away either. This way we wasted 1.5 hours on nothing, with solely a **White-bearded Hermit** as a new species. After that we went back to Limoncocha and along the drive we had **Opal-crowned Tanager** in a tree next to the road. A **Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet** flew over our head while observing the Tanager.

Near Limoncocha we birded along the road and followed some trails Pablo knew, the most important one starting here: -0.422492, -76.630148. We walked this path till the open field and tried a long time for **Yellow-billed Nunbird** (also along the main road), but couldn't find it. We did encounter **Cinnamon Attila** and **White-shouldered Antshrike** and got good views of both.

There is a trail into the forest where Pablo made a feeder for **White-lored Antpitta**, which we were able to observe the next morning. **Riparian Antbird** (HO) and **Black-throated Hermit** were observed while at the Antpitta feeder. The area behind the open field/at the feeder is also the place to try for **Ecuadorian Cacique**, which we missed despite trying many attempts. Pablo also has a feeder for **Black-banded Crake**, which we were able to observe shortly after a long wait.

We left multiple times from the harbour south of Limoncocha (-0.444980, -76.625476). Next to the parking (west of the coordinates) are some big trees in which **Western Pygmy Marmosets** can be observed. Unfortunately they are frequently harassed by locals with slingshots, so they are apparently very wary. There is a big market here every Saturday, so avoid this day if you can. North of the market are some palms where **Sulphury Flycatcher** can be found.

**Black-banded Crake****White-lored Antpitta**

The second afternoon we went to the lagoon east of Limoncocha (-0.40676, -76.61953). We paid 40USD for a boat that went around the whole lake for the afternoon (14.30 – 18.30). **Azure Gallinule** was very common and we observed about 14 of them. Other goodies we observed were **Sungrebe**, **Little Cuckoo**, **Slate-colored Hawk** and thanks to the excellent hearing of Pablo we observed 2 **Orange-fronted Plushcrows**! We did search for **Least Bittern** (the boatman knows some stake-outs), but it started raining before we got to the right patches. **Agami Heron** and **Horned Screamers** are also sometimes observed, but don't count on these.

**Hoatzin****Azure Gallinule**

#### **Riverside locations near Limoncocha**

The first afternoon we left for the Harpy Eagle, which has a known nest location. We paid 30USD in total for the canoe. The entrance is about 8.5km from the harbour (around -0.40466, -76.57324), where it is another 600m walk towards the tree with the nest (-0.4005, -76.57559). We quickly found the female sitting in the tree close to the huge nest! She was calling and hopping from branch to branch.

The second morning we took a canoe (20USD) to the other side of the river, opposite of the harbour (-0.45796, -76.63961). We observed **Olive-faced Flycatcher** directly after getting off the boat. From there we took some trails towards something that Pablo called 'el puente' (-0.4644, -76.6372). The construction however was the weakest excuse of a bridge we've ever seen, but it did get us into

some nice habitat. This was a very good place for many species, but the target **Orange-crowned Manakin** wouldn't show. But we got some really good consolation prizes, including **Black-throated Antbird** (which are totally black with a white spot on the back in this part of their range), **Plumbeous Antbird**, and awesome views of **Black-spotted Bare-eye** and better even: **Lunulated Antbird**!



**Harpy Eagle**

**Black-spotted Bare-eye**

### **Napo River Islands & Clay Lick**

We visited several islands on the Napo River. These islands are home to many species which specialize in that habitat and some live mostly or even exclusively on river islands! The first day and again on our way to Sani we visited the island opposite of the Harpy trail (-0.4100, -76.5721). Here we found **White-bellied Spinetail** and **Dusky-throated Spinetail** in the lower reed-like and scrubby vegetation. **Olive-spotted Hummingbirds** were singing from tops of the smaller trees. Getting more inside the dense and higher reed-like vegetation we observed **Castelnau's Antshrike**. This is also a good place to try for **Parker's Spinetail**. Farther on the island we walked around a marshy area in search of **Horned Screamer**, which we didn't find. We did see **Spotted Tody-flycatcher**, **Caqueta Seed-eater** and a **Muscovy Duck** (which are uncommon in Ecuador). **Ladder-tailed Nightjars** were regularly flushed while walking around the island.

The second river island worth mentioning is close to Sani (-0.51749, -76.3699). On this island we observed both **Parker's Spinetail**, **Black-and-white Antbird** and **Castelnau's Antshrike** (HO).

**Gray-breasted Crake** was heard on multiple islands and was once observed flying a short distance after being flushed. Other target species that we missed on the river islands are **Lesser Hornero**, **Bicolored Conebill**, **River Tyrannulet** and **Riverside Tyrant**.

On the way to Sani we stopped at the clay lick along the river (-0.5243, -76.3764) and observed low numbers of all four species of parrot that come here to feed on the clay around 11.00: **Dusky-headed Parakeet**, **Blue-headed Parrot**, **Southern Mealy Parrot** and **Yellow-crowned Amazon**.

### Sani Comunidad

The plan was to hire a canoe + boatman for 4 full days and spend 3 nights near the Sani Community. Many lodges and hotels along the Napo River are run by communities or (big) local families. One of them is Sinchi Wayra Lodge (not recommended!!!). We had a deal for 400USD in total for 4d/3n, but already the first morning the boat didn't show up in Limoncocha. Pablo arranged another boat for the day (100USD) and said he would arrange that we'd only pay 300USD for the remaining part of the deal. Of course this is not how it went. Once there they tried to give us the crappiest room they had and increase the price of the deal threefold. After long discussions and many hours waiting we finally got a room, but lost most of the valuable birding hours in the late afternoon and evening. We left the next morning and wouldn't recommend anybody to go here!

The other two nights were spent at the Sani Comunidad. We were dropped off at the main jetty (-0.47668, -76.31326) and walked to the Llikchary Institute (-0.47662, -76.31156). As we brought all our food and water we only need a bed to sleep in. The owner then told us it was 25USD p.p.p.n., which was obviously way too much for a very rustic place without running water etc. He quickly settled for 40USD in total for 2 nights for the 2 of us.

We walked a trail going into good primary forest near the Sani Comunidad (trail starts somewhere around -0.47889, -76.33578), and paid 10USD p.p. for the use of the trail. The trail is a bit hard to find in the beginning (aim for -0.471098, -76.338361). The first afternoon we walked this trail all the way towards a stake-out for *Rufous Potoo* (-0.463567, -76.339837). Pablo hadn't been here for almost a year and couldn't find the Potoo in the afternoon. We came back the last night, but it started pouring right when it became dark and we decided to get back quickly as other rains had lasted the whole night! During the afternoon walk Pablo picked up many goodies (he really knows his sounds!) like **Black-faced Hawk** (amazing views!), **Spot-winged Antbird** (HO), **Common Scale-backed Antbird**, **Striated Anthrush** (HO, -0.4692, -76.3378), **Rusty-belted Tapaculo**, **Rufous-capped Antthrush** (amazing views!) and **Fulvous Antshrike** (HO).



**Black-faced Hawk**



**Many-banded Aracari**

On the last morning we left at 06.00 to bird around the Sani Comunidad, and Pablo surprisingly asked what we wanted to see. As he had the list and we already discussed the plan to search for *Ecuadorian Cacique*, we were surprised to hear then that he didn't know the location for them. Luckily we got that location from a trip report of Radstaak (2019) and found our way there, taking a small side trail (-0.47417, -76.318094) and from there following the trail to the place where they are supposed to breed (-0.4659, -76.3202). Unfortunately we couldn't walk the last 100m as the water level was too high (above our knees) and the Caciques didn't respond along the route either. Then it started raining until 09.00, so we waited that out in the 'lodge'. Again we were surprised to hear that Pablo said there are no good birds to be found around Sani Comunidad, so then we spend the next 3 hours waiting in the lodge for the boat which he had told to be there around 12.00.

### Sani Lodge

Pablo worked at Sani Lodge many years back and has good contacts. This is how we were able to go there for a day and use the trails and a canoe for 20USD p.p. As the water level had risen dramatically, our chances for *Agami Heron* were close to zero. There were barely any muddy edges left and the Herons go deeper inside the forest with rising water levels. We went straight away to the observation tower, and en route we observed both *Slender-billed Kite* as well as *Grey-headed Kite*. Right after we entered the forest from the jetty we observed the awesome looking *Dot-backed Antbird*. The observation tower is located at the end of a 700m trail in a huge emerging tree (-0.4395, -76.2923). Activity was low, but we did observe *Many-banded Aracari*, *Opal-rumped Tanager*, *Bare-necked Fruitcrow*, *Yellow-browed Tody-flycatcher* and *Rough-legged Tyrannulet* (HO). Targets that can be observed from the tower are *White-browed Purpletuft*, *Purple-throated Cotinga*, *Plum-throated Cotinga* and *Spangled Cotinga*.

At the jetty for the tower we observed *Rufous-breasted Hermit*, *Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet* and *Yellow-crowned Elaenia* (HO). We then continued along the stream towards a place for one of our major targets: the (almost) endemic *Cocha Antshrike*. We heard 2 and later we observed a female at another spot (-0.4445, -76.3047). On the way we observed *Silvered Antbird* (-0.4437, -76.2984). As it's quite a long trip with the boat, we would keep this location as a back-up, and first go to the place recommended by Radstaak (2019), which is only a 300m walk from the river (-0.4444,-76.2838).



Spotted Tody-flycatcher

Dot-backed Antbird

On the way back to the river we only observed **White-chinned Jacamar** and **Pygmy Antwren** as interesting species.

### **Yasuní National Park**

The third day was spent on a trail within the Yasuní NP (20USD p.p.). We actually took a small and overgrown trail behind a random house (-0.509266, -76.349572), which we followed until it came to the edge with the Napo Lodge terrain, which had a good broad path to walk on. Birding was again pretty slow and it was very quiet in the forest. Luckily we did find one of our major primate targets pretty soon in an open area: **Golden-mantled Tamarin** (-0.5151, -76.346), which only occurs on the south side of the river. We failed to find **Napo Saki Monkey**, which is not surprising if you read the considerable effort of other mammal watchers who went specifically for this species (instead of also focussing on birds). Even though birding went slow we still picked up **Orange-cheeked Parrot**, **Citron-bellied Attila** (HO), **Dugand's Antwren** (HO, but heard quite often high up in the canopy) and **Fulvous Antshrike**.

A small flock with Antbirds yielded **Grey Antwren**, **Long-winged Antwren**, **Cinereous Antshrike** and **Rufous-tailed Antwren/Rufous-tailed Stipplethroat**. Pablo then heard **Yellow-billed Nunbird**, which he then found high up in the canopy. Right after he heard and lured in **Chestnut-winged Hookbill** and **White-eyed Tody-tyrant**. While it was already hot and almost mid-day, Pablo played the sound of **Slaty-backed Forest-falcon**. Surprisingly enough an individual responded about 5 minutes later and was eventually seen high up in a tree!

While taking a break to eat something we quickly had to pack everything because Pablo heard **Grey-winged Trumpeter**, **White-plumed Antbird** and **Ochre-striped Antpitta** at the same time! We first went for the Trumpeter, and Pablo suddenly started running like crazy towards the sound. We couldn't keep up and both irritated and surprised asked why he did that. He said that if they are in a group they fly up and sit higher in a tree. But apparently now there was just one, and of course it was chased off far away into the forest without there being any chance for us to actually see it. The Antbird couldn't be found again, so we went for the Antpitta. It took about 2 hours of listening and skulking through the shrubs before the Antpitta came running shortly into the open and both Romy and I were able to observe it. Not much later it came out a second time, but it got scared again because Pablo moved too loudly to see it, hence ruining the photo opportunity ☹️ But at least we got good views of this rare **Ochre-striped Antpitta** (-0.5188, -76.3469)!

Walking back we observed a **Dusky-chested Flycatcher**, but didn't observe anything else in the now almost silent forest. We failed to find **Ash-throated Gnateater** and **Black-necked Red-cotinga**, which occur here too.



Slaty-backed Forest-falcon



Golden-mantled Tamarin

### Final remarks on Limoncocha/Napo River

Although Pablo is a nice person and a good birder (he knows his sounds and the English names), arranging things was not his strong suit. Many things went wrong on our tour up the Napo River and all that together took way too much time in which we couldn't watch birds or mammals. That is besides the headaches and worries it gave as we were never sure if something was arranged and we would be able to go when we got up at 05.30 in the morning. Besides that he barely comes to that region anymore (he hadn't been there for almost a year), and doesn't have up-to-date locations or stake-outs and territories of many target species. If you are on a budget we would advise to bird the Limoncocha area with him (see targets above, but make sure he has arranged things well before, like the canoe for the Cocha Antshrike), the opposite side of the river ('el puente') and maybe do one day of river islands and come back the same day to Limoncocha (a boat for a day should cost around 100-150USD). The trip to the Harpy Eagle can be combined with the river islands, but can also easily be done alone (most boatmen know where it is, otherwise steer them to the coordinates). Likewise the trip on the lagoon east of Limoncocha can easily be arranged privately as well.

## Antisana NP/Tambo Condor

[-0.45942, -78.32312](#)

Visited dates: 2-4 June 2023

### Tambo Condor/Mirador Condor

The road via the village Pintag is not great, but should be doable with any vehicle. We arrived at Tambo Condor (-0.459421, -78.323126) in the afternoon and asked the owner Vladimir (+593 9 8848 6196, Spanish) for the recent information on Bears. They had seen one the day before from the restaurant around noon, but didn't have any other precise information. He just pointed toward the cliff opposite of the valley and said they occur anywhere on that cliff towards the national park. He let us camp in our car in the upper parking lot and we were allowed to scan from the second floor of the restaurant. We were also able to walk towards the cabin that is 200m closer to the cliff, as from there you can see the lower 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the cliff as well. Vladimir is a very nice man, and we would

definitely recommend staying in the cabin near the cliff if you want to search for Bears in the around here ([see website](#)).

The other viewpoint is located about 200m farther up the road (-0.4581, -78.31928). There is a sign 'Mirador Isco', also known as the Condor Platform. This viewpoint gives a great overview of the cliff opposite and allows you to scan a whole different part of it than from Tambo Condor, with a slight overlap (so you shouldn't miss anything when switching viewpoints). **Andean Condors** can be seen resting above the white markings very early in the morning and late in the afternoon.



**Spectacled Bear**

**Spectacled Bear**

We also scanned from a point just before the NP control post. Walking down the road a little bit (-0.463045, -78.316844) towards Hacienda Huaytara, you can see yet another part of the cliff. The Bears even seem to cross this road sometimes, as there was lots of feeding evidence in the small valley towards the East (parallel to the road in the NP). This valley can also be scanned from inside the NP (around -0.467499, -78.313747). According to the ranger scanning from another point within the park should also be good (-0.476119, -78.305947). We didn't find that last one very promising, so we didn't bother going in and out of the park every time to scan for Bears.

We basically switched between Tambo Condor, Mirador Isco and the point before the NP control post the whole day between 06.00 and 18.00. Sometimes scanning for 15 minutes and then continuing (especially early morning) and sometimes waiting an hour or more to see if anything would move. We scanned with our thermal camera as well as with binoculars and telescope, as we found it hard to imagine how big a Bear would be if it would sit or walk on the other side. It was on the second morning (so after almost 2 days of searching) that Romy scanned with the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal camera, and shouted: "I see one, I see one!!". An amazing looking **Spectacled Bear** was lying under a rock quite far away from us (we were on the Mirador Isco). We were able to see it with our binos and scope, and would eventually have picked it up with our binoculars as well most likely if we wouldn't have had the thermal camera. Once the sun came out it would have been impossible to find it with the thermal camera or binoculars though, as rocks warmed up (thermal camera) and many dark shadows formed (binos). We were able to observe it for about 2 hours as it

lifted up its head when Condors or **Carunculated Caracaras** flew by. After 2 hours it started to walk, inspected some bromeliads and walked down behind a rock wall, out of our sight. We drove to the third point and were able to pick it up again, and then it went left. We drove back to the Mirador and there were quite some people looking around, some of them with binos. Once we pointed them to the Bear most of them barely (pun intended) seemed very impressed. Our enthusiasm was obviously very high after 2 days of searching, and it couldn't have worked out better as the Bear walked at the same level on the opposite of the cliff. This time it was very easily visible with the naked eye too, and way bigger than we expected. While walking it inspected some plants and seemed to eat some of them, but mainly continued walking farther. It disappeared in some shrubs and it took some time before it showed up on the other side again. This is why we would recommend scanning at least 30 minutes at each point. After that it disappeared in the shrubs above the waterfall. We waited for 2.5 hours more, but the Bear didn't come out again.



**Carunculated Caracara**



**Spectacled Bear**

#### **Antisana NP**

Antisana NP is open from 08.00 – 14.00, and is free to visit. You just have to register the driver at the control post (-0.468194, -78.315173). We first stopped at a gully, where we observed **Ecuadorian Hillstar** feeding on some orange flowers. In the curve about 200m farther is where we observed **Streak-backed Canastero**.

Higher up in the park we observed many **Andean Condors** flying around and **Carunculated Caracaras** standing in the grass. **Andean Ibis** was observed around the spot indicated by Sjoerd Radstaak, 2019 (-0.5094, -78.2275). **White-tailed Deer** were abundant and **Andean Tapeti** was seen a couple of times too. At the lake you have to register every visitor before you can walk in. We weren't impressed by the lake and only observed more common waterfowl.

## Papallacta

[-0.32947, -78.20269](#)

Visited dates: 4-6 & 8-10 June 2023

There are some different places to visit around Papallacta. We mainly came here to search for Spectacled Bear and Mountain Tapir and some bird targets we had left. The weather was quite bad most of the time, with only a few moments of clear skies/cloudy overcast and no fog. The fog wasn't the worst either; we also had quite some rain and strong winds, making it very unpleasant to be outside with temperatures just above 0 degrees Celsius.

### Antenna Road

At the top of the pass, there is a small turnoff (-0.332322, -78.202776) which leads to a gravel road. Going right from there you soon encounter a ranger station ([-0.329479, -78.202699](#)). There used to be a chain, but now there is a barrier that can be locked. If you ask the ranger he might let you in before 08.00 (we were allowed in at 07.00). You can only enter until 15.00, and once in you can stay until 17.00. Around the ranger station is a good place for **Red-rumped Bush-tyrant**. We searched for it every day we were here, but only encountered 2 resting on the electricity wires on the very last day. You can drive up to the antennas (-0.320056, -78.191747), which is the best place for **Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe**. Thanks to our Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal camera we found one the first time we went up despite the dense fog, very strong winds and rain! **Jameson's Snipe** are seen up here as well, but we couldn't locate it. **Spectacled Bears** are seen every now and then, mainly around the ranger station. They had one on the 8<sup>th</sup> in the morning, which we found out when we arrived there again the 8<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon. **Andean Tapeti** and **White-tailed Deer** are quite common along the road. Birds of interest that we encountered along the way up are **Red-crested Cotinga**, **Blue-mantled Thornbill**, **Paramo Ground-tyrant**, **Tawny Antpitta**, **Brown-backed Chat-tyrant** and **Andean Tit-spinetail**.



Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe



Andean Tapeti

### Old Quito Road

As we had some time to kill around the opening hours of the antenna road, we spend a lot of time on the Old Quito Road. To get there, instead of going right to the ranger station, you turn left ([-0.332096, -78.203267](#)). The road is a bit bumpy at times, but gravel all the way. The surrounding fields and mountain hillsides area good place to search for Spectacled Bears. With a thermal camera one can easily scan these, and cover quite some ground in a short time. We camped 4 nights along this road and searched every morning and afternoon for them, but didn't encounter any. We also did 4 night drives. For a big part of the road nobody can see you or your lights, which is convenient. There is no traffic at all at night - we only encountered 1 or 2 cars during daytime anyway -. We drove from the beginning of the road (near the turnoff towards the ranger station) towards a part after which it gets less interesting and more populated (-0.304334, -78.232406), which is 6km in total.

The first night we encountered 2 **Andean Tapetis** and 2 **Band-winged Nightjars**. The second night we suddenly saw some eyeshine on the side of the path, which turned out to be the rarely seen **Mountain Paca**! It moved a bit on the road, but seemed to catch our scent in the air as we were directly standing in line with the wind direction. Still we managed to get some record shots, before it moved back into the vegetation where it came from. We waited a while in the car, light on, engine off, but it didn't come back. Later we had **Andean Fox** in the fields below. In the thermal camera we could pick up a big shape with two little dots, crawling up a hill. The flashlight could only just reach far enough to pick up eyeshine from the bigger shape. The size, shape and way it moved we are 99% sure these were **Spectacled Bears**, but we'll never know for sure. There was no way to get to that area, but it did give hope for the searches in the days to follow.

The third night started off with **Greater Horned Owl** calling from the top of a shrub nearby. Besides **White-tailed Deer** and **Band-winged Nightjars** we didn't encounter anything IDable. We saw one low shape crossing the road, which might have been an Armadillo or Opossum, but we couldn't find it back in the vegetation. The fourth and last night only yielded **Andean Tapeti** and **Andean Fox**.



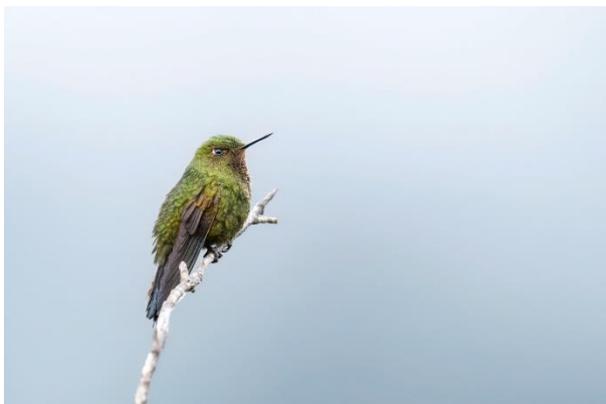
**Red-rumped Bush-tyrant**



**Mountain Paca**

### Cayambe Coca Ecological Reserve

We read about people searching for Mountain Tapir and Spectacled Bear in the park itself, so we wanted to give it a try. The reserve is only open from 08.00-15.00. Outside those hours one can park at the hot springs and walk the 4km between there and the ranger station. One has to drive from Papallacta towards the entrance of the Thermal Baths ([-0.363099, -78.148786](#)), continue to ranger station ([-0.32538, -78.147959](#)). After a few 100m past the Thermal Baths we observed a **Mountain Tapir** with an identity crisis on a grassy hill on the left side. This Tapir is collared and is used to graze with the cows. We had it three times (afternoon, the next morning and that afternoon again) here at the exact same field as where friends of us observed it 2 weeks before. A **Spectacled Bear** with cubs had been observed the day before we went to the ranger station. It had been seen on the lower part of the valley on the right side when driving up to the ranger station. Arriving at the ranger station we had to dot down our details and surprising to us; leave our vehicle at the parking. We thought and hoped that we could drive the main road to the indigenous community, as the area around and behind Laguna de Loreto is supposed to be good for Bears. The ranger said it's a 3-4km walk to there, so we didn't have time after we walked another trail. We walked the trail going left after the ranger station, past Laguna de Baños and then towards Laguna Parcacocha (there is a map at the ranger station). Even though this walk is only 4km and a 300m rise in altitude, it took us 5h to walk to there and back. The landscapes are beautiful, but not very different from the landscapes around the Old Quito Road and the Antenna Road. But you only cover the same distance in at least 5x as much time. It was pretty easy to scan with the thermal camera, and then it took some time before you could scan a new area. Of course you can be lucky, but we didn't feel like the walk was worth the effort. We are more goal-oriented and just the walk alone doesn't do it for us if we don't see much. Besides that; we don't mind the shelter of a car against the rain instead of having to walk 2.5h back when it starts raining ;-). We did observe **Many-striped Canastero**, **Andean Tit-spinetail**, **Pale-naped Brushfinch**, **Tawny Antpitta**, **Viridian Metaltail** and a **Red-rumped Bush-tyrant**, besides the **Andean Tapetis**. We aren't sure if one can drive in the park with a guide; be sure to ask if you hire a guide ☺



**Viridian Metaltail**



**White-tailed Shrike-tyrant**

## Quito

0.00442, -78.48821

**Visited date:** 10 June 2023

This short stop is actually NW of Quito, on the main road towards Mindo. Coming from Quito, we parked on the right side of the road (0.004009, -78.489919) and walked back to the chapel. Behind the chapel is a trail going south (0.004425, -78.488211). A couple of 100m into the trail is a known spot for the rare **White-tailed Shrike-tyrant** (0.003191, -78.488190). During our short stop we encountered **Cinereous Conebill**, **Golden Grosbeak** and **Ash-breasted Sierra-finch** as well.

## Yanacocha Reserve

-0.11173, -78.58485

**Visited dates:** 10-12 June 2023

We drove from Quito towards Yanacocha Reserve via the route indicated on their website. The last 9km the road is a bit less comfortable, but should be doable with any car. We arrived around 14.30 and they were just closing up. We were allowed to overnight on the parking lot in our motorhome, and paid 5USD entrance fee + 5USD camping fee p.p. There is no lodging, but there is an official camping area for tents, and this might be a good solution for a bit adventurous independent birders who want to have 2 chances for the Imperial Snipes. Nights can be very cold, so bring appropriate gear. The park itself is very nice, with one trail that is 95% flat (unique for this altitude!) and a couple of side trails that bend off and get back to the main trail again.

The advantage of camping in the reserve is that you will have the reserve totally to yourself after 15.00, when the park closes. One of our main goals was to try for the Imperial Snipes. The ranger had pointed us to a trail up the hill, which would take about 40-60 minutes from the entrance to get to. We had read about a different place in the report of Lennart Verheuevel (2019) on the main Inca Trail, which is only 15-20 minutes' walk from the entrance. There is a bench in the corner on the trail, which overlooks a valley (-0.1163, -78.58874). We waited here and around 18.30 two Imperial Snipes began to call down in the valley. We tried to lure them into view, which didn't work. After only a couple of minutes the calling was over. We read on Birds of the World that they will call through the night only in breeding season (without it being specified which period that is), so it might just have been the wrong time of the year. The next morning we tried again, but as we arrived around 05.30 we might have been too late. The sky was very clear, and the ranger said that in his experience they call more with dense fog, which might be the other reason they didn't call this morning.

In the morning we continued the Inca Trail towards the hummingbird feeders (-0.1273, -78.59047). There are two other feeders a little bit up the hill after the toilet building, but these barely attracted anything while we were there. Some trees just before the feeders attracted **Purple-backed Thornbill**

(high up in the canopy). The feeders below attracted **Tyrian Metaltail**, **Buff-winged Starfrontlet**, **Sword-billed Hummingbird**, **Great Sapphirewing**, **Mountain Velvetbreast** and two of the three Pufflegs in the park: **Golden-breasted Puffleg** and **Sapphire-vented Puffleg**. Unfortunately the endemic Black-breasted Puffleg doesn't come (regularly) to the feeders, besides some incidental reports. The ranger pointed us to a place along the Inca Trail where they had seen a female of the endemic Puffleg forage on tubular flowers above the trail a couple of times lately. This place has a grassy patch, a sign with birds on their (with Mountain-tanagers and Antpittas) and the name-sake trail of the endemic bird starts there (-0.120718, -78.590027). We staked this spot out for a while, and only observed **Tyrian Metaltail** and **Golden-breasted Puffleg** at first. Then a small hummer came out of the trail, flew low but didn't hang around in order to get a sure ID on it. We decided to wait longer and after 70 minutes again a small hummer came out of the trail, and this time just hang still enough to clearly appreciate the smaller size (Metaltail size), clear white puffs and a darker green-blackish sheen on the back: male **Black-breasted Puffleg** (e)!!! It flew erratically and took off quickly. We waited again for a while, but it didn't come back. Again in the afternoon we waited there for another hour, but nothing showed up. Other birders staked out that place the day after for 3.5h, but had nothing besides the common hummers. The rangers confirmed that the male had blackish(green) on the back too, and that it behaved way differently (more erratic flight, rarely sitting still) than the other Pufflegs. Apparently most sightings are as fleeting and 'good' as ours, so we should consider ourselves very lucky.



**Sapphire-vented Puffleg**



**Buff-winged Starfrontlet**

We decided to try another night, and this time followed the ranger's advice and climbed up the hill. The Andean Snipe trail starts about 10 minutes after the gate (-0.117454, -78.586153). The climb up is only 850m, but take about 30-45 minutes. The best part for the Imperial Snipes is on the right side once you're up the hill and continue for about 300m (-0.123291, -78.585419). This is where we heard one Snipe at night around 18.25 and again in the morning at 05.27. In the morning activity was better with about 3-4 individuals flying around. Even though it was quite clear, we only picked them up with our Thermal Camera and saw them in the flashlight once, but very high. We tried to lure them to the ground, as we heard people got great pictures here. One came down, started calling from a perch, and we worked our way through the Polyepsis towards the spot. Just 10m before the spot of the

snipe we ran into a wall of bamboo, and while working our way through the Snipe flew away again. They stopped calling around 05.45, and other birders who came up around 06.00 missed them (even though they were at the gate around 05.00). This is why we would advise camping. If you just want to visit for a morning, then try to let them open the gate already at 04.00 if you want to climb up the hill, or at 04.30 if you just want to try at the place along the main trail. The place up the hill is a tedious climb, but we estimate that your chances are better here and photo opportunities as well (due to the *Polyepsis* trees around where they can land).

We tried for *White-throated Schreech-owl* at night, but only heard **Band-winged Nightjar** (everywhere) and **Rufous-banded Owl** (near the camping). Spotlighting we found **Andean Guan**, **White-browed Spinetail** and **Andean Tapeti**. The reserve must be one of the best places to hear and actually see **Ocellated Tapaculo**. It was calling from every direction, and we were able to get amazing views close to the main trail. **Equatorial Antpitta** was seen multiple times on the Inca Trail, and we heard **Undulated Antpitta** and **Chestnut-naped Antpitta**. We didn't search specifically for other targets like *Golden-crowned Tanager*, *Black-breasted Mountain-tanager* or *Curve-billed Tinamou*, as we had seen those at other places.



White-browed Spinetail



Ocellated Tapaculo

## Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve

[-0.01617, -78.68108](#)

Visited dates: 12 & 18-19 June 2023

We showed up at the Bellavista Cloud Forest Lodge in the morning after driving the scenic road from Yanacocha Reserve. We paid the 10USD p.p. entrance fee for day visits (and the owner Richard even allows motorhomes to stay for 10USD p.p.p.n. which allows a 2 day visit for the same price). Our main targets were not too difficult. **Gorgeted Sunangel** (ne) was encountered on one of the two hummingbird feeders, which also attracted many **Buff-tailed Coronets** and **Lesser Violetear**, **Purple-throated Woodstar** and **Fawn-breasted Brilliant**. **Plate-billed Mountain-toucans** came to the banana feeders around 17.30, but they also show up early morning. **Montane Woodcreeper** and **Strong-**

**billed Woodcreeper** hang around the moth trap the whole day, and **Choco Brushfinch** also showed up regularly. We walked the F-trail from the lodge to the main road and then turned right to the Landayapa Cloud Forest Station (-0.012518, -78.687111). Even though it was already after 11.00 we encountered nice mixed flocks on the F-trail, with species including **White-tailed Tyrannulet** and **Streaked Tuftedcheek**. At the station we encountered a flock with **Dusky Chlorospingus** and then we heard **Western Hemispingus**. Playing the tape of Black-eared Hemispingus they responded quickly and hopped into views. We walked back along the road, trying for **Tanager Finch**, but didn't even hear them. We then took the R-trail back to the lodge. The R-trail goes through some patches of bamboo, and this is where we observe **Striped Treehunter** and **Lineated Foliage-gleaner**. Others have seen **Flammulated Treehunter** here.



**Buff-tailed Coronet**



**Gorgeted Sunangel**

At 19.00 we got a chance to see the Olinguito. We staked out the banana feeders, the hummingbird feeders and the Olinguito feeder (also with a bunch of bananas), as an array of mammals might show up on all of these. They have seen **Tayra**, **Kinkajou** and Olinguito coming to them. Around 19.30 we observed an **Olinguito** (or **Andean Olingo**) trying to get to the sugar water in the feeder. The guide was just changing them, so it scared the animal off. In the end we were able to follow it for about 2 hours, sleeping in the tree, going for a banana at the feeder and just going from place to place. Amazing to see this animal so up close! Very dense fog inhibited any spotlighting that night along the road.



**Olinguito**



**Plate-billed Mountain-toucan**

Around Mindo we found the forest bordering the road less interesting, so we decided to come back here to search for Andean Porcupine, which has been observed around Mindo up to the region around the lodge. We searched for about 1.5h but only encountered one **Kinkajou**. Going back to the feeders at the lodge the next morning we observed **Tayra** eating the bananas from the Tanager feeder. Driving back to Mindo we suddenly had **Barred Hawk** flying up from the road with a fresh kill.

## Refugio Paz de las Aves

0.02011, -78.70715

**Visited dates:** 13-15 June 2023

We had reserved for the 13<sup>th</sup>, and only received a message around 18.00 the day before that we were welcome ([reserve via the website](#)). Contact them via WhatsApp if you don't get a confirmation or have questions with Vinicio Paz (+593 987 253 674, Spanish/English). Driving up the road the next morning (0.033415, -78.720721), but didn't actually know where to meet. We expected that all the land around the road would be theirs, but that is (not yet) the case. We drove up to the lodge (0.020134, -78.707151) and there we met Angel Paz. He took us to the parking spot with the trail towards the **Andean Cock-of-the-Rock** lek, which is apparently the meeting place where you should go (0.021272, -78.706734). We observed the lek from 06.00-06.45 and meanwhile observed **Toucan Barbets** coming in. Angel lured in **Scaled Fruiteater**, which we got great views of.



**Toucan Barbet**



**Giant Antpitta**

We then drove down to the place along the public entrance road for the Giant Antpitta (0.027301, -78.717293). Up to 3 Giant Antpittas show up here, but they hadn't seen them for two days already. We waited for 1.5h while Angel and his brother Rodrigo called the Antpittas and walked around. We enjoyed ourselves with the **Zeledon's Antbird**, **Nariño Tapaculo** and **Olive Finch** (HO). We searched the small cliffside for **Lyre-tailed Nightjar**, but came up empty-handed. A bit farther down the road we had **Rufous-bellied Nighthawk** on a roost high up in a branch above the road (0.027875, -78.718964). We then drove up for breakfast, which we expected to be huge considering the price we

paid for the morning (60USD p.p.), but this was coffee with one Bolón (typical Ecuadorian breakfast ball) and one empanada de viento with cheese (typical Ecuadorian empanada style). At breakfast Rodrigo got a call that Angel had seen the **Giant Antpitta** just behind the accommodations farther up the hill. We raced there and got great views of a juvenile.



**Yellow-breasted Antpitta**



**Chestnut-crowned Antpitta**

We then went to the **Yellow-breasted Antpitta**, which took a while to come to the feeders (it's harder this time of year to lure in Antpittas because they have young). We then got word that Angel already lured in the **Moustached Antpitta** (0.019466, -78.705627) along the trail behind the feeders, which we got decent views of. Shakira, the **Ochre-breasted Antpitta** showed up the next day at the same spot. While waiting at this spot we observed **Lineated Foliage-gleaner**, **Crimson-mantled Woodpecker** and **Olivaceous Piha**. Another drive brought us to the feeder of **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta**.



**Purple-bibbed Whitetip**



**Purple-throated Woodstar**

With the morning tour you are allowed to stay the day for the hummingbird feeders and banana feeders. These attracted **Ecuadorian Thrush**, **Toucan Barbet**, **Crimson-rumped Toucanet**, **Black-chinned Mountain-tanager** and a whole bunch of beautiful Tanagers. The hummingbird feeders attracted (in order of abundance); **Buff-tailed Coronet**, **Velvet-purple Coronet**, **Fawn-breasted Brilliant**, **Violet-tailed Sylph**, **Brown Inca**, **Lesser Violetear**, **Andean Emerald**, **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird**, **White-booted Racket-tail**, **Purple-bibbed Whitetip**, **Purple-throated Woodstar** and

once an **Empress Brilliant**. In the trees around the feeders we observed **Guayaquil Woodpecker**, **Choco Parakeet** (split from Maroon-tailed Parakeet) and **Golden-headed Quetzal**. At night we observed **Black-and-white Owl** near the accommodation.



**Velvet-purple Coronet**



**Flame-faced Tanager**

## Mashpi Amagusa

**0.15976, -78.85313**

**Visited dates:** 15-18 & 23-25 June 2023

The area of Mashpi is very interesting for many mid- to lower elevation species, including many Chocó endemics. The turn-off (0.066347, -78.692546) from the main road is more eastwards seen from Mindo than one might expect. Most of the road is paved, except for the last part, which is good gravel. The quarry just before the viewpoint is where we observed Lyre-tailed Nightjars at night, including a spectacular male with very long tail feathers. There is a nice viewpoint just before you have to turn onto the smaller road going up at your left (0.161377, -78.845563). Reserva Mashpi Amagusa is located along the smaller road at your left. You can reserve accommodation, the campsite, food and/or day visits with Sergio & Doris (+593 981 183 057 or reservamashpiamagusa@gmail.com, Spanish/English).



**Wedge-billed Woodcreeper**



**Pacific Tuftedcheek**

Birding here mainly involved roadside birding, so we figured we would sleep next to the road. When asking about **Western Mountain Coati**, that is supposed to show up regularly here at the banana feeders, they insisted we slept on their parking lot free of charge. The next two mornings and one afternoon we waited on top of the hill, where the banana feeders are located. The Mountain Coati didn't show up unfortunately. It apparently sticks around for a while and is not bothered by humans at all when it does show up. We enjoyed ourselves with the array of birds coming to the feeders, like **Crimson-rumped Toucanet**, **Black-chinned Mountain-tanager**, **Flame-faced Tanager**, **Golden-naped Tanager**, **Glistening-green Tanager**, **Rufous-throated Tanager** and even **Moss-backed Tanager**. Both **Black Solitaire** and **Pacific Tuftedcheek** were observed in the trees behind the feeder. **Red-tailed Squirrel** tries to take some bananas too, as **Western Dwarf Squirrel** hopped around in the trees as well.

An unripe banana feeder next to the car park attracts **Rose-faced Parrots** daily, and allows for spectacular close up views of these gorgeous Parrots! Right behind the Parrot feeder is where we found 2 **Club-winged Manakins**, including a stunning male! (The guides seemed to know this place as many went there to try). We were finally able to add **Yellow-bellied Siskin** to our list on their property as well. **Rufous-fronted Wood-quails** were heard daily.



**Rose-faced Parrot**



**Moss-backed Tanager**

Most of the birding involves roadside birding, and the owner Sergio knows all the names in English and is very eager to join people to help them find their targets, even if they didn't reserve a guide. If you have space in your car he just as well joins to the lower parts of the main road. With the help of Sergio we observed **Tawny-breasted Flycatcher** very well. Other birds observed along the road (most of them in mixed flocks) are **Orange-breasted Fruiteater**, **Pacific Tuftedcheek**, **Black Solitaire**, **Choco Vireo**, **Rufous-rumped Antwren**, **Streak-capped Treehunter**, **Olive Finch**, **Smoky-brown Woodpecker** and **Bronze-olive Pygmy-tyrant**. **Barred Hawk** flies around too and perches sometimes near the lodge when it drizzles, but the afternoon it was observed we were lower on the main road.

**Black-chinned Mountain-tanager****Tawny-breasted Flycatcher**

Spotlighting at night along the main road yielded **Olinguito** and **Common Potoo** during 2 nights, besides the Lyre-tailed Nightjars described above. We hoped for **Andean Porcupine**, which the owners had observed once before and should occur at this altitude.

A couple of days later. Just when we wanted to drive south from Santo Domingo we got a message from a birder we had recommended Mashpi to. The message included a picture and the question: "Observed this morning. Can't find what it is, do you know?" I opened the picture and even though blurry it was clearly a Pacarana! For those who don't know, this species is quite enigmatic and elusive and rarely seen in the wild. After getting some more info we turned the car around and 2 hours later we were back at Mashpi again. We got the update that they walked towards an Antpitta in the morning on the main road and at 05.47 encountered it casually sitting on the road. The flashlight didn't bother it and it walked along the road and sat again, doing this a couple of times before it took off onto a steep slope around 05.51. As this mammal is nocturnal and the slope was quite steep we figured it would have a burrow of some sorts there and it might reappear there that evening. So just after 18.00 we set off and put food out (rice, plantain, papaya peels) to see if an animal like this could be lured to a feeder in the future by Sergio. We stationed ourselves in some chairs at 100m distance and scanned with the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal camera. It started to rain, so we huddled under umbrellas, hoping the rain would stop. Romy set out walking the road around the corner, to be sure it wouldn't come off the slope at another point. We agreed she would flash her green laser 2 times if she would see anything. After a couple of times I saw 2 flashes and ran over there, and we got nice views of **Central American Woolly Opossum**. We were able to get good shots and went back to our chairs. After 2 hours the rain had stopped and now it just dripped from the trees still. After more than 3 hours Romy walked the road again for the umpteenth time. I was selecting the Opossum pictures from the viewer of the camera and was therefore kind of night-blinded. Then suddenly laser flashes, not two, but a continuous stream. Flash-flash-flash-flash. Half-blinded I got up, started to run, ran back to get by flashlight, grabbed frantically around in the dark to find it, during what seemed to be an eternity while behind me laser flashes kept going off. Flash! Flash! Flash! I turned on my flashlight and ran as fast as I could, faster and faster. FlashFlashFlash! The flashing of the green laser kept going. I finally got to Romy and asked her "Where?! Where?!". Romy: "You're standing

right next to it!". I looked to my right and there it was, a real **Pacarana**, within less than a meter from me!!! It apparently had come to the road within the 2 minutes Romy had passed the spot and turned around. It had come to the other side of the road, and was walking towards me sitting in the chair (or the food), but me storming towards that spot had made it go back to the side. The Pacarana, a large male with a darkish head, went to the gully next to the road again. It was only that we knew it was there that we were still able to observe some small eye-shine and heat in the thermal camera, otherwise we would have walked straight past it. We waited for a while and it came back on the road, allowing for some nice pictures. It actually walked straight towards me lying on the ground. It went from side to side on the road, allowing for great views of this awesome looking, slow-moving and weirdly walking rodent (the biggest in South-America after the Capybaras). After a while it moved down the very steep slope, in a small gully that seems to be used more often by wildlife.

Excitingly we walked back and spotted a **Northern Black-eared Opossum** at the lodge. We went to bed around 22.30 but couldn't sleep until 01.00 because of the adrenaline. The alarm was set at 04.00 again and we waited at the same spot to see if it would cross the road again to go back to the presumed burrow. It didn't. We walked the road again for 2.5 hours that following evening in dense fog, but didn't encounter any mammal.



**Pacarana**



**Pacarana**

For Sergio this was the first time he had ever seen this animal, but his mother has seen one walking through the former pastures (they are reforesting that part now) about 8 years ago. It has also never been seen on camera traps, but it didn't seem like they had many of them out there or lots of experience setting them up. They also don't go out a lot to search for mammals at all it seems, as they are more focused on birders. We can imagine them passing by one walking in the gully and missing it easily after our experience. The food we put out was basically untouched even after two days, so that didn't seem to be attractive to the Pacarana after our encounter. Chances of actually seeing one are probably still low, but it does motivate to know they are around here. Especially when there are also chances for other interesting species like Western Mountain Coati, Olinguito, 2 Squirrel species, at least 2 Opossum species, Andean Porcupine and who knows what else.

### Lower Elevations

The second afternoon we drove down the main road towards Reserva Natural Sacha Guatusa ([0.188351, -78.853821](#)), where we hoped to find **Violet-bellied Hummingbird** and **Purple-chested Hummingbird** on the Verbena next to the road. One can camp here and they have lodging too, but as a birder and mammal watcher we would stay at Mashpi Amagusa. We waited for our pizza (weekends only) for 1.5h while observing the flowers, but only had **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird**, **Green Thorntail** and one **Green-crowned Woodnymph** (don't be fooled by this one, it's easily mistaken for a Violet-bellied at first). Not really worth the pizza (12USD) + entrance fee (5USD p.p.). We did see **Emerald Tanager** on the feeders and encountered **Collared Aracari** (ssp. Pale-mandibled) and an immature male **Long-wattled Umbrellabird** along the main road just after the accomodation. **Orange-fronted Barbet** (ne) sometimes shows up in the trees above the feeders, but according to Sergio it is best searched for in *Cecropia* trees along the main road between Mashpi Amagusa and Sacha Guatusa.

Farther down the road (0.198574, -78.870163) we encountered a good flock which included some mop-up species we had left, including **Yellow-winged Flycatcher**, **Lesser Greenlet** and **Russet Antshrike**. Even farther (0.195435, -78.874306) we encountered **Pale-legged Shrike-vireo**. A flock around this location yielded **Scarlet-browed Tanager**, **Grey-and-gold Tanager** and **Choco Tyrannulet**.



**Green Thorntail**



**Indigo Flowerpiercer**

## Mindo

[-0.05886, -78.77108](#)

**Visited dates:** 15 & 18 June 2023

Driving through Mindo towards the birding sites, one passes some empanada stands. Ecuadorian empanadas are '*empanadas de viento*', with lots of air and little filling. Delicious when made nicely (like at Paz de las Aves), but not very filling. There is one empanada stand from a Venezuelan guy that makes delicious '*empanadas de harina*', filled with cheese or chicken for 1USD each. It's the stand closest to the road (-0.056454, -78.774373), not the one farther from the road (which empanadas are smaller and more expensive too; 1.75USD per empanada).

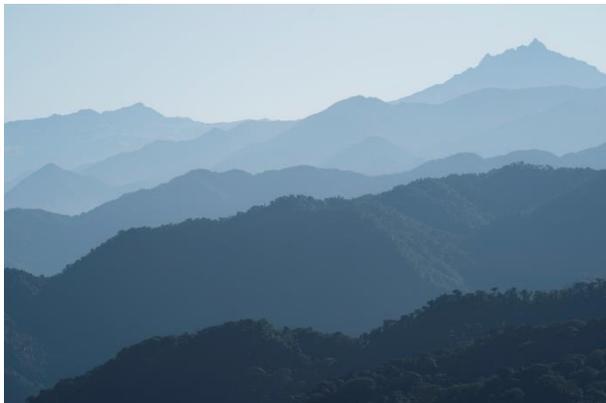
### San Tadeo Birding

We stopped at San Tadeo Birding ([-0.02904, -78.75261](#)) to ask the very friendly owner Anderson Garcia about recent sightings of *Western Mountain Coati*. He said that they only show up at his father's place in the rainy season (January-February). His father's place is about 3km back along the road towards Quito. We didn't go there, but he says that Tayra, Olinguito and Kinkajou are all coming to the bananas at night (and Tayra in the morning) most of the year. You can WhatsApp him to inform about recent sightings and to make a reservation (+593 990 785 026, Spanish/English).

### Waterfall Trail

We only had very few targets left in the region, but the town Mindo and the surrounding forests are one of the best places for a couple of bird species. First we stopped at the T-intersection ([-0.058867, -78.771086](#)), and walked the road towards the east. Within 100m we encountered *Coopman's Eleania* (ne). We then drove over the small bridge, where we (after walking the road from the ziplines down to this intersection) encountered *Yellow Tyrannulet*. We drove to Casa Divina Lodge ([0.064946, -78.768836](#)) and encountered *Blue Seedeater* in the bamboo between the parking lot and the main lodge (which is also good for Yellow Tyrannulet early morning according to the owner).

Many people bird the road going up to the waterfalls, but as it was Sunday it was super busy with cars. We observed *Violet-bellied Hummingbird*, and hoped for *Barred Hawk* to fly in the sky. Others have found *Cloud-forest Pygmy-owl*, *Scaled Fruiteater*, *Dark-backed Wood-quail* and *Yellow-bellied Siskin* amongst many other things along this road.



Mountain Landscape



Barred Hawk

## 23 de Junio

[-0.03178, -78.87649](#)

Visited dates: 19-20 June 2023

This place is famous for its *Long-wattled Umbrellabird* lek. We informed with Luis Agila via WhatsApp (+593 990 639 057, Spanish) and heard it was a very good time to see the males lekking.

We were allowed to camp on the farm and had to be at the lek at 06.00 in the morning. Entrance fee was 20USD p.p. including a small breakfast. We met Luis already in the afternoon at his house on the right side of the church in the very small town (-0.031789, -78.876498). We then drove towards the end of the public road (-0.062756, -78.877801), where we camped. From here it's about 10-15 minutes on the trail behind the parking towards the forest with the Umbrellabirds. It's a slippery walk, and you have to cross one stream. They plan to extend the road all the way up this or the next year. We decided to follow the trail already on our own in the afternoon and got stunning views of male **Long-wattled Umbrellabirds** displaying in different trees, seen from the main trail. We also heard **Ecuadorian Mantled Howlers** calling, but couldn't find them. The next morning Luis was at our car at 05.35 and we walked up through a locked gate, up a small hill, towards the lek (-0.067576, -78.878982). We expected a lek similar to the Cock-of-the-Rocks, partly because Luis said they would be very low in the morning. The opposite was true and the males started calling in the dark (05.50) and flew from branch to branch and from tree to tree, mostly very high up. Males were lekking far away as well, and the lek might therefore have a radius of 100m+ (which is called an 'exploded lek'). Around 06.30 the females showed up, the males followed and the show was over. For us the afternoon before was actually better for observation. We lingered around the feeders for a bit and scanned the trees, finding **Black Solitaire**, **Toucan Barbet**, **Dusky Chlorospingus** and heard **Cloud-forest Pygmy-owl**. We then walked the trails in search of the Howlers, but couldn't find them. Luis is trying to get the **Rufous-fronted Wood-quails** (HO) to come to a corn feeder, which would make a good addition for the money spent.



Long-wattled Umbrellabird



Dusky Bush Tanager/Dusky Chlorospingus

## Jocotoco – Reserva Canandé

[0.52609, -79.21289](#)

Visited dates: 20-22 June 2023

To get to Jocotoco's Canandé reserve, drive the main road E28 towards the west until you reach Puerto Quito. Then drive northwards on the paved road via Simon Bolivar, Los Golondrinas (bad part of the road), La T, Zapallo and then to Puerto Nuevo. At Puerto Nuevo (0.46352, -79.24372) you have

to cross the Canandé river on a pontoon boat, attached to 2 smaller boats that power the pontoon. Make sure you have a reservation of Jocotoco to show on the boat, or say you are going to Hoja Blanca or Reserva Tesoro Escondido, as Jocotoco is the only organisation demanding a paper from the boatmen. We paid 2USD one way for our car on the ferry. The road after this to the reserve is in bad shape and is preferably driven with a 4WD.

We arrived at the research station (0.526094, -79.212945), which was way bigger than we expected it to be. The reserve is about 10.000 hectares, but the timber company has 35.000ha, so that explains the constant stream of logging trucks passing by the station. Luckily Jocotoco is buying up more land to protect this lowland forest, and visiting reserves like this helps doing that. There are 4 comfortable rooms, located near the restaurant (farther away from the road), which looked very cosy. We camped on the parking lot next to the road and paid the 15USD p.p. entrance fee.

Rain season is from November – May according to the ranger, and it often rains all day or all night. We were now in the transitioning period, and in between the afternoon showers we walked the main road. We heard **Stripe-throated Wren** from far away and near the sign at the top of the hill we observed **Ecuadorian Mantled Howler** sneaking over the branches. Around the station we shortly observed **Orange-fronted Barbet** (ne) in a *Cecropia* tree. Other interesting birds around the station were **White-thighed Swallow**, **Pacific Antwren** and **Purple-chested Hummingbird**. At night we only found one **Armored Rat** crossing the road during 1.5h of spotlighting.



Crossing the river



Yellow-tufted Dacnis

The next morning we walked the Choco Tapaculo trail (starting on the right hand side just after the second guest cabin) and then the Banded Ground Cuckoo trail. The trails were quite muddy (especially the lower parts), so rubber boots are a must. Even though the ranger said they were well marked, we found them not to be as there are multiple bigger paths veering off and intersections without signs. We eventually came to a lookout called 'Black-tipped Cotinga viewpoint', with a sign lying upside down on the ground. Apparently this is the mirador as stated on the map. As it was very foggy and later started to rain, we didn't see much. Both **Tawny-faced Gnatwren** and **Chestnut-backed Antbird** were heard all the time, so these sounds are good to learn. Walking with an umbrella and fogged up binos we were too late to see what we flushed off the trail, and we can only fantasize

this was one of the target species like *Banded Ground-cuckoo*, *Tawny-faced Quail* or *Olive-backed Quail-dove*.

That afternoon we decided to scan with the scope from the balcony of the ranger's houses. We observed a male **Black-tipped Cotinga** from far away. Then we found a tree with at least 7 **Ecuadorian Mantled Howlers** in them, feeding on fruits and leaves. Not much later we saw movement in a high tree, and these turned out to be 2 **Brown-headed Spider-monkeys**! That night it rained even more, so no chance for spotlighting.

The second morning we walked the trail starting on the left side of the restaurant. The ranger had indicated this as the Tawny-faced Quail Trail, but once we ended up at the road we realised this was actually the Barred Hawk Trail (the Quail Trail starts on the right side, going past and behind the restaurant). The Barred Hawk Trail was not muddy at all and walked more pleasantly than the ones the day before. Despite the name confusion, we heard **Tawny-faced Quails** not far into the trail. Not long after we observed **Northern Tamandua** foraging along the trail and then climbing up into a small tree. We were able to observe this stunning animal for a long time and the rains from that night might have caused it to still be out in the morning. Except for **Velvety Manakin** and **Black-crowned Antshrike** we didn't observe much more on the trail. The ranger said it is quieter due to the heavy rains the period before.



**Northern Tamandua**



**Leaf-mimic Katydid**

## Santuario de Aves Rio Silanche

[0.14491, -79.14129](#)

**Visited dates:** 22-23 June 2023

The Rio Silanche reserve is only 150ha big and located about 6km from the main road. The road towards the reserve is fairly good gravel, driveable with any rental vehicle. The entrance fee is 15USD p.p. or 25USD for a 3-day ticket (which also includes the Milpe reserves). One can reserve with [info@mindocloudforest.org](mailto:info@mindocloudforest.org) or +593 99 944 4834. We arrived around 15.00 and activity was close to zero as it was quite hot. We drove our car to the tower where the camping area is and stayed the

night next to the tower. Normally there is a camping fee, but for some reason we were only charged the 15USD p.p. to stay until noon the next day. There are 2 relatively short trails, one on each side of the road. The trails are on Google, but there is only signal with Movistar. Take a screenshot before you go. The trails are broad and well maintained (no leaves!), but can be a tad slippery here and there.

We spotlighted the trail starting at the tower and ending at the ranger station (and then back to the tower), and it took about 2-2.5h to spotlight it with flashlights and thermal camera. We started by playing the tape of the *Berlepsch's Tinamou*, which is often seen around the tower. The rangers try to lure it with corn, but they didn't put anything out there that night. As the trail is quite broad and so well maintained, it's really good for spotlighting. A couple of 100m into the trail Romy observed a big white blob in the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal camera, and this turned out to be an **Ecuadorian Mantled Howler** sleeping alone on a branch. Halfway in we found **Central American Woolly Opossum**/**Derby's Woolly Opossum**. That one was barely gone when Romy noticed another long shape on a horizontal branch. These turned out to be 5 **Rufous-fronted Wood-quails** sleeping 20m high up in a tree. Right after Romy again spotted something; this time **Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth** hanging from a vine, with a baby on the belly. On two different locations we found a total of 3 **Kinkajous**. Almost near the ranger station something jumped away on the right side of the path, and Romy could just make out the shape of an *Armadillo spec.* in the thermal camera. Unfortunately we couldn't find it anymore, but there were lots of digging traces around. Around the ranger station we found **Common Potoo** hawking for insects.



**Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth**



**Central American Woolly Opossum**

In the morning we went up the tower around 06.30 and immediately we observed 2 female and 1 male **Scarlet-breasted Dacnis** (ne), the main target in the reserve. **Orange-fronted Barbets** (ne) were observed regularly from the tower the next couple of hours. Another very good bird suddenly perched right in the open on top of a palm close to the tower: **Plumbeous Hawk**. It started calling for a couple of minutes and we got superb views of this normally elusive forest-raptor. Other interesting birds observed from the tower were **Yellow-tufted Dacnis**, **Scarlet-browed Tanager**, **Grey-and-gold Tanager**, **Red-rumped Woodpecker**, **Black-capped Pygmy-tyrant** and **Barred Puffbird** (HO). With the

sun out we got too annoyed by the many sweat bees to stay on top -we heard lemon grass oil helps against them-; we decided to walk the trail again and heard **Berlepsch's Tinamou** and observed **White-tailed Trogon**.

Walking the trail on the other side of the road, starting and ending on the right side, about 100m after the main entrance (0.145502, -79.140569), we observed **White-whiskered Puffbird** in some tangles. Almost at the end we observed a dull looking **Choco Manakin**, which clearly had a yellowish belly and greyish legs. Except for **Dot-winged Antwrens** we didn't observe much more of note.



Rufous-fronted Wood-quails



Plumbeous Hawk

## Proyecto Washu

[-0.39538, -79.68218](#)

We didn't actually visit this place, as we had seen **Brown-headed Spider-monkey** in the Jocotoco Canandé reserve. But we had made all the arrangements to do so and wanted to share the information for any mammalwatcher out there. The place is about 1.5h southwest of Santo Domingo, in the Manabi Province (near -0.395388, -79.682181). We had contact with Felipe Alfonso-Cortes (+593 99 255 7707, Spanish/English), the main researcher of project Washu. They research the ecology and behaviour of the monkeys in a fragmented landscape, and are open to enthusiastic mammal watchers coming to search for the primates. Felipe figures a 2-day visit would be best, but often 1 day is already enough as they aren't too hard to find. There is very basic accommodation available at the project.

## Bosque Pedro Franco Dávila

[-1.24032, -79.66797](#)

Visited date: 26 June 2023

We still hadn't found **Ecuadorian White-fronted Capuchin**. We saw many observations on iNaturalist in a forest of only 2.5 x 0.8km and hoped they would be easy there. We went to the forest owned by the University of Guayaquil; Bosque Pedro Franco Dávila, located near a small hamlet called

Jauneche. Google said that the reserve is open on Mon-Fri from 08.00-16.00. We arrived on Monday at 08.00 and encountered two rangers cutting the grass. They told us the forest was closed and we couldn't enter because there were many fallen trees on the path. In the end they allowed us to go in, but it was very clear the path hadn't been maintained for months. Every 50-100m there were multiple fallen trees over the trail, and it was sometimes very hard to find the trail back on the other side. This way we worked our way 1km into the trail (which has a total of 3km) and encountered many **Ecuadorian Mantled Howlers** and one **Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth**. After 1km we couldn't find the trail anymore as it was too overgrown. We turned around and only encountered **Guayaquil Woodpecker** and **Scarlet-backed Woodpecker** as interesting bird species. The rangers said they were going to work on the trails, but it's better to inform with the university first before coming here. That said, the rangers also mentioned that there is only one group of Capuchins in the whole forest, so they still might be difficult to find. A policeman on a motor said he wanted to escort us when we were going back, as they said the main road back wasn't safe. They followed us for about 10km before we went our separate ways again. We didn't feel unsafe at any time while driving there, but we don't say no to a police escort and a cool story ;).

## Portoviejo

[-1.03078, -80.44617](#)

Visited date: 26 June 2023

### (Casa) Poza Honda

[-1.11756, -80.20505](#)

We drove to Casa Poza Honda (-1.11662, -80.19327) in order to try for the Brown Wood-rail that is sometimes observed around the lodge. Driving there we had to pass security, that let us pass when we mentioned the lodge and the owner's name (Jürg Arnet). Right after crossing the dam, we thought we could give it a try already. Less than 2 minutes later we were watching at some very shy **Brown Wood-rails!** We also heard them responding on the other side of the lake, so maybe they are not very rare around Poza Honda. We heard and then spotted **Whooping Motmots** on the same spot above the road.



**Ecuadorian Mantled Howler**



**West Peruvian Dove**

## Refugio de La Tomatera

[-1.03078, -80.44617](#)

Northeast of Portoviejo there is a popular hiking/biking trail up the hill. We drove towards La Tomatera (-1.03078, -80.44617), walked up from there and back to the car for 1.5h. **Pale-browed Tinamou** was heard the whole time we were there. Walking up we encountered birds like **West Peruvian Dove**, **White-browed Gnatcatcher** and **Scarlet-backed Woodpecker**. We hoped to observe **Rufous-necked Wood-rail**, of which 3 had been observed in a small pool of water on the mountain bike trail, but it was very dry and the Wood-rails didn't respond. The **Grey-capped Cuckoos** probably already left their breeding grounds. **Rufous-headed Chachalacas** have been seen by other birders too. The best bird observed by us here were the surprisingly common **Grey-cheeked Parakeets** (ne).

## Puerto Lopez

[-1.56107, -80.81741](#)

Visited dates: 26-29 June 2023

We totally forgot about this species, and only afterwards we saw there are many observations of **Parrot-billed Seedeater** right in the town of Puerto Lopez. Good to check eBird when in town!:)

## El Pital

[-1.5916, -80.763](#)

East of town goes a road along which there is some great birding in a stunning landscape. Take the turn-off from the main road (-1.553862, -80.807738) and continue on this road. Already when driving up the road there were **Peruvian Pygmy-owls** sitting on a branch next to the road. We parked the car on top of the hill (-1.5916, -80.763) and walked a couple of 100m in each direction. It was during the middle of the day and we still observed some great species. Walking in the direction of Puerto Lopez we observed both **Speckle-breasted Wren** and **Superciliated Wren**. We heard **Grey-and-gold Warbler** very often, and got to see it a couple of times going through the vegetation. Also going through the vegetation was **Black-capped Sparrow**, of which we got a short but decent view. We hoped to encounter **Necklaced Spinetail**, but only observed **Slaty Spinetail**. This should be a good place too for **Violet-bellied Hummingbird**. The only hummers we encountered were **Purple-crowned Fairy** and **Amazilia Hummingbird** (ssp. *dumerilii*).

Walking in the other direction we encountered **Tumbes Pewee**, **Pacific Eleania** and the rarer **Grey-breasted Flycatcher**. An **Ecuadorian Trogon** flew across the road and that was all the viewing it allowed. The best species observed were **Ochre-bellied Dove** (HO, but heard often) and **Saffron Siskin**. This should be a good place for **Crimson-breasted Finch**, but we encountered none. In the right season **Grey-capped Cuckoos** can be observed here too. Pay attention to the sky for **Tumbes Swift** (split from Short-tailed Swift).

**Tumbes Pewee****Eared Dove**

## Isla de la Plata

[-1.26828, -81.06605](#)

We booked a tour on the 27<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon and went on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Even though there are many tour agencies offering the tour, they are all exactly the same. When I bluffed I already got the tour somewhere for 30USD, one of them said it was impossible because they were only allowed to go to 35USD p.p. until the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. After that the high season price would be 45USD p.p., without room for negotiation (until the end of November). Anywhere you book, you will go with the same boats and same guides, unless you want to charter a boat for your own group (500USD per boat, max 16 pax). The tour starts at 09.00, but they don't actually leave before 09.30. On the way we got many encounters with **Humpback Whales**, of which we were allowed to watch 2 more up close. Amazing how these huge animals breach! The Humpbacks should be here between June and October. **Brydes Whales** are seen more often between January and April.

**Humpback Whales****Humpback Whale**

We arrived on the island around 11.00, and only walked for maybe 1.5h (the rest we waited around for no clear reason). As it was obviously very hot during the middle of the day, bird activity was very low. We still raked up some species like **Short-tailed Woodstar**, **Snowy-throated Kingbird**, **Collard Warbling-finch**, **Crimson-breasted Finch** (unfortunately only a female) and **Grey-and-white Tyrannulet** (a species that is difficult in other places in Ecuador). **Blue-footed Boobies** and **Nazca Boobies** were present, but in very low numbers. They said the island was still very green and that

they only start nesting when the island is dried. The greenness was also the reason we didn't observe any **Red-footed Boobies** (these rest and nest on bushes instead of on the ground). There was one breeding pair of **Waved Albatross**, and this path was closed, so chances of actually seeing one here are very low. We did get to see **Red-billed Tropicbirds** flying close by! After a small lunch we did some snorkelling and observed **Green Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*)**. Then we went back, observed one more Whale from up close (and many more seen farther away) before we arrived back in town around 16.30. This day was amusing, but not as good as we had hoped with all the possible species. If your group is big enough, we would consider chartering a boat.

Another option is to hire the guidance of fisherman Winston Churchil (098 99232 17). He is not allowed to go to Isla Plata with his small boat, but he can bring you to the nearby Salango Island. There you can observe Blue-footed Boobies, South-American Sea Lions and Humpback Whales up close as well for half the price of Isla de la Plata. He was even open for leaving at 06.00 in the morning, and the testimonies he showed were all positive (in all different languages and hand writings, so it seemed legit).

Note: **Green Turtles** can already be observed for free from the dock in Puerto Lopez (-1.56107, -80.81741) **Blue-footed Boobies** come to the beach too (especially when fishermen bring in the fish), as well as **Peruvian Pelicans**, **Brown Pelicans** and **Magnificent Frigatebirds**.



**Magnificent Frigatebird**



**Red-billed Tropicbird**

## Refugio del Colibrí (Public Road)

**[-1.67594, -80.80729](#)**

We planned to go to Río Chico – Reserva La Esmeralda (-1.613255, -80.831618) first, but a man there informed us that the **Esmeralda Woodstar** (e) is only present in December and January, lingering until April/May. Then it gets too cold and the Woodstar migrates to other regions. As it was also already late (it had rained until 11.00 that morning), we decided we would walk the public road a bit more south (turn-off at -1.674971, -80.811221). On the first, more open part, we observed many **Ecuadorian Ground Doves**. We parked the car before the road got narrower and bumpy and continued on foot from there. This is where Refugio del Colibrí is located which should be good for

the Woodstar at other times of the year. It's more humid forest with lots of vines and shrubs, as opposed to the drier shrubs and cacti we expected (as at El Pital). Walking the road we still managed to pick up good species like **Ecuadorian Trogon** (especially around -1.675699, -80.803139), **Tumbes Tyrannulet**, **Guayaquil Woodpeckers**, **Tumbes Tyrannulet**, **Superciliated Wren**, **Grey-and-gold Warbler** and lots more. Just when we turned around (-1.680731, -80.797623) we suddenly had lots of activity in the dense shrubs, with **Western Fire-eye**, **Slaty Antwren** and **Plain Antvireo** present. On the way back we encountered the beautiful **Plumbeous-backed Thrush** in a fruiting tree. The site has a lot of potential, with species like **Crimson-breasted Finch**, **Ecuadorian Piculet**, **Necklaced Spinetail**, **Ochre-bellied Dove** and even **Slaty Becard** (ne) having been observed. It might have been the time of day that made it less productive for us, but we liked the El Pital site a lot more.



**Guayaquil Squirrel**



**Ecuadorian Trogon female**

## Salinas

**-2.18967, -81.01089**

**Visited dates:** 29-30 June 2023

## La Chokolatera

**-2.18967, -81.01089**

The viewpoint at La Chokolatera is supposed to be good for land-based sea watching. The problem is getting through the military checkpoint (-2.19773, -80.98483) outside of the official opening hours (entrance from 08.00-15.00, exit from 08.00-17.00). We arrived in the afternoon around 16.45 and explained that we would only sit at one point and watch the birds that fly by, and that these hours are the best. Eventually they let us in and we stayed until 18.00. The same worked in the morning from 06.30-08.00. When we drove in early morning we saw the last **Lesser Nighthawks** going to their day roosts. Already around the parking one can observe many **Guanay Cormorants**, **Blue-footed Boobies** and **Peruvian Boobies**. In the afternoon (sun coming from sea, so not ideal) we picked up quite some **Sooty Shearwaters**, **South-American Terns** and only three cherries: **Brown Booby**, **Swallow-tailed Gull** and **Pink-footed Shearwater**. As this year is an El Niño year, there have been more reports of rarities, but still mostly from a boat. **South-American Sea Lions** can be observed in the water or by watching to the rocky islands towards the left; or by going to the Lobería (-2.20344, -

80.99702). Also from the viewpoint we were able to observe many **Humpback Whales** both in the afternoon and morning. In the morning everything at sea was quite far away, even though there was a decent wind blowing from the west. There were literally 1000s of Sooty Shearwaters going south, which was a great spectacle to see. Other birds that looked interesting (big and a white head) were all so far away that there is no way to be certain if it was **Waved Albatross**, a species that is sometimes seen from here. Besides **Royal Terns** and **Elegant Terns** we had to do with one **Red-billed Tropicbird** as a reward for getting here early.



Peruvian Tern



Peruvian Pelican

## Salt pans

[-2.26661, -80.92344](#)

We first drove along the coast to have a look at the salt pans, but that didn't work well. Then we found an entrance (-2.26666, -80.923302) with a barrier that can be opened easily, which allows birders to drive a small road between the salt pans (officially only allowed between 08.00—17.00, but it's open outside those hours). Turn left directly after the barrier. This part was a bit overgrown, but nothing too serious. Afterwards the road gets better again.

Driving along the salt pans we encountered **Grey Gull**, **Grey-hooded Gull** and **Gull-billed Terns**. Driving farther (there is only one road) we had two different groups of **Peruvian Terns** resting on the road, with in total about 40 individuals. In between the groups we observed one **Black-bellied Plover** and right next to us landed a group of **Stilt Sandpipers**, with in between them an individual in breeding plumage. Later we came to an area (-2.244196, -80.949005) with a great diversity of waders, some of them also still in breeding plumage. On the dry part **Snowy Plovers** were foraging, while in the shallow water we observed **Semipalmated Sandpiper**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Western Sandpiper** and **Sanderling**. In the deeper parts we could make out **Short-billed Dowitchers**, more **Stilt Sandpipers** and **Wilson's Phalaropes**. **Chilean Flamingos** could of course not be missed in the salt pans.

## Guayaquil

[-2.18667, -80.01757](#)

Visited dates: 1-3 July 2023

### Bosque Protector Cerro Blanco

[-2.18667, -80.01757](#)

We contacted a local biologist (Benjamin) for some information about the *Ecuadorian White-fronted Capuchins* that he observed in this park west of Guayaquil. He said that observing them in the touristic part is very difficult and rare, but we were able to go with him to some other parts where he said chances were better. As this part is not public we won't write too much about it. Long story short: we didn't find them. The rangers said that there are times they see them every day and then they sometimes disappear for 15 days again. We did encounter many *Ecuadorian Mantled Howlers*. Luckily the day wasn't a total loss, because we encountered many good and rare birds; *Grey-breasted Flycatcher*, *Rufous-headed Chachalaca*, *Pacific Royal Flycatcher*, *Saffron Siskin*, *Ecuadorian Trogon*, *Ecuadorian Piculet* and *Grey-backed Hawk*!



*Ecuadorian Mantled Howler*



*Grey-backed Hawk*

### Ecological Reserve Churute Mangroves

[-2.4528, -79.62806](#)

On the way to the mangroves we made a quick stop after the toll station (around -2.204783, -79.747551). There we were finally able to observe *Comb Ducks*. They are seen often around the Guayaquil area, so be sure to check eBird for recent sightings when visiting this region.

We were allowed to camp at the administration centre (-2.4528, -79.62806). Officially one has to register here before going to the mangroves too, but it didn't seem anyone was checking at the mangroves. Official opening hours are from 08.00-16.00. In the morning we walked the trail up the hill behind the administration centre. Besides the tons of mosquitos we encountered *Guayaquil Squirrels* and *Ecuadorian Mantled Howlers*. For a minute we thought we heard an *Ecuadorian White-fronted Capuchin*, but it turned out that Howlers can also make these 'khip' sounds. Capuchins are seen here and at the trail near the mangroves, but they seem to be very rare in this park.

Driving towards the mangroves (turn-off at -2.41957, -79.6247) we encountered **One-colored Becard** and our first **Chestnut-throated Seedeater**. We got warned by the rangers at the administration centre and the police that the community you have to drive through is not very safe, but we had no problems at all. The 'Aulladores' trail starts at the side of the road (-2.420515, -79.650001). The trail is only 2km long, round trip. There are many good potential birds to see here, but we found it very quiet. We did encounter **Jet Antbird**, and were finally able to observe **Black-headed Antthrush**. We thought we heard **Pacific Royal Flycatcher** shortly at the stake-out mentioned by Rob Gordijn (-2.416, -79.6494), but we weren't able to see it or hear it again to be 100% sure. Near the point where the two trails get together we observed **Grey-lined Hawk**. The part to the waterfall wasn't very interesting, although the stream might be interesting for Royal Flycatcher. Other birds of interest found along the trail were **Ecuadorian Thrush**, **Ecuadorian Trogon**, **Grey-and-gold Warbler** and **Pallid Dove**. **Ecuadorian Mantled Howlers** were again abundant in the forest.

Along the roadside near the entrance of the trail we observed a female **Crimson-breasted Finch**, but again couldn't find a male. **Superciliated Wren** was encountered multiple times along the road too.

The trail into the mangroves (-2.42438, -79.66147) was way less interesting than we hoped, and only 300m long. We did encounter a juvenile **Common Black Hawk** (sometimes 'Mangrove Hawk', *Buteogallus anthracinus subtilis*) in the mangroves. At the dock we observed **Mangrove Warbler**.

A bit farther south we birded the road mentioned by Rob Gordijn (starting at -2.50787, -79.58573), but we didn't get far. It seems that the condition of the road deteriorated since Gordijn's visit and that the road is not publically accessible anymore; the road was very muddy with some very deep holes, not to mention a locked gate after a couple of 100m. We did encounter **Chestnut-throated Seedeater**, **Large-billed Seed Finch** and **Drab Seedeater** fairly quickly. A **Pearl Kite** was perched on the electricity wires. A **White-throated Crake** called from a marshy part. Maybe the road north of the canal is better.



**Chestnut-throated Seedeater**



**Large-billed Seed-finch**

## PN Cajas

[-2.78338, -79.22238](#)

Visited dates: 3-4 July 2023

### Molleturo Road

[-2.64737, -79.43841](#)

Not really PN Cajas, but on the way there from Guayaquil. It's a short drive from the main road onto the Molleturo Road to some parts that are suitable for **El Oro Tapaculo/Ecuadorian Tapaculo**. We had to wait out some rain and later walked in the drizzle at the first part (around -2.634, -79.444), but didn't encounter anything. At the stakeout from Rob Gordijn we initially heard nothing (except for **Ecuadorian Mantled Howler**) and walked up the road (up to -2.652095, -79.439047). **Red-masked Parakeets** were perched on top of a dead tree when we walked back down. Then suddenly we heard a female Tapaculo calling (second call on Merlin) and not much later a male started calling too (-2.647378, -79.438416). The sound seemed to come from lower down the hill where our car was parked (the stakeout from Gordijn). It wouldn't come closer so we gave up on actually seeing it. In between the bamboo along the road went a couple of **Streak-headed Antbirds**.

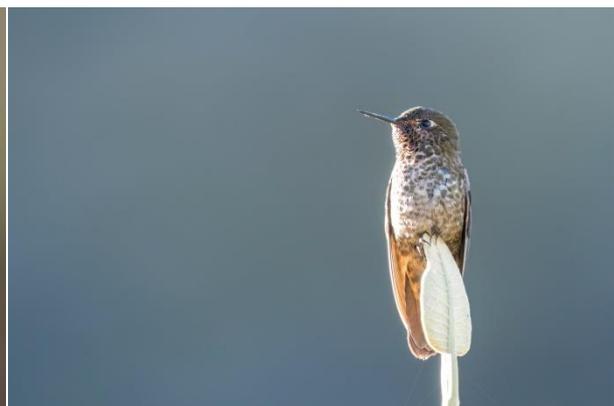
### PN Cajas

[-2.78338, -79.22238](#)

Thanks again to Gordijn we knew we could only bird one location before 08.00 ([-2.77562, -79.26058](#)). We parked the car and passed by the simple barrier that said trespassing was not allowed. On the part behind we encountered both **Stout-billed Cinclodes** and **Chestnut-winged Cinclodes**. Romy spotted **Violet-throated Metaltail** (e) right in front of her, but it was hard to see against the rising sun. Luckily we encountered up to 3 individuals chasing each other just 50m farther. A female **Ecuadorian Hillstar** joined and seemed to win the fight. It was a delight to see **Tit-like Dacnis** again, and on the swampy field we observed some **Andean Teals**.



Ecuadorian Hillstar



Violet-throated Metaltail

At 08.00 we made our way to one of the park entrances ([-2.783388, -79.222386](#)), where we only had to register. The trails weren't as great as we expected, but we decided to walk around a bit anyways. **Tawny Antpitta** was heard everywhere, and one crossed the path right in front of us. Besides more **Ecuadorian Hillstars** we observed a stunning male **Blue-mantled Thornbill**. **Many-striped Canastero** sang on top of the shrubs. Other good birds that could be encountered here are **Plain-capped Ground-tyrant**, **Mouse-colored Thistletail**, **Andean Tit-spinetail** and **Giant Conebill**. Driving towards the next section of the park **Red-rumped Bush-tyrant** was perched on top of the wires, just 1km after we left.

To reach the entrance of another part of the park ([-2.84463, -79.14249](#)) one has to drive 3km on a cobblestone road, doable by any car. Again we registered, parked 100m farther and walked the trail. At the little house next to the lake (-2.844294, -79.144943) we heard 2 **Ecuadorian Rails**, but weren't able to see them. We walked the trail around the lake, hoping to finally see **Andean Pygmy-owl** or even **Red-faced Parrot** (ne). Eventually we found neither, but did observe **Violet-throated Metaltail**, **Yellow-breasted Brushfinch** and **Andean Gulls**. On top of that; the scenery was quite amazing.

## Cuenca – Camino al Cielo

[-2.77306, -79.00472](#)

**Visited dates:** 4-5 July 2023

Only 15km north of Cuenca is a dirt road called Camino al Cielo. We drove up there, but neither Maps.me nor Google Maps seemed to know the best route through the maze of roads in Checa, the small village just before the destination. Just follow the best looking road and you'll get there. The road is steep and with loose pebbles after the last village, and from the entrance of the trail (-2.784047, -79.004809) it gets more bumpy with some tricky deeper trenches. We drove up the road, took the right turn (-2.777069, -79.006129) and parked it (2.773125, -79.004742) as after that the road got quite muddy and we were close to the good forest anyways. The road going to the right after the turn is only 1.5km long. The road going to the left is way longer, but has many parts where the vegetation along the road is less interesting for birdwatching.

If you don't fancy driving after the entrance of the unpaved road, it's a 1.6km extra walk uphill (200m elevation gain) towards the place where we parked. We arrived late in the afternoon (17.10) but still wanted to give it a try. The good forest already starts 200m after the parking, and within 10-15 minutes we had our main target flying over our head and landing in the trees next to the road. We got amazing looks at 5 **Red-faced Parrots** (ne), a rare and endangered parrot of high elevations. They really got all the colours in their face and wings that exist; wow, are they pretty! Later another 4 flew by our parking spot late afternoon. The next morning we had again a big flock flying down the valley from where we parked. We walked the trail going left at the turn (-2.777069, -79.006129), but we

found this habitat less attractive and less suitable for most birds. We still had a fly-by of 2 Red-faced Parrots.



View at Camino al Cielo



Red-faced Parrot

And the Parrots are not the only good thing one can find here. We found an array of Hummingbirds, including **Glowing Puffleg**, **Sapphire-vented Puffleg**, **Shining Sunbeam** and **Rainbow Starfrontlet**. A mixed flock yielded **Rufous Wren** and **Plushcap**, amongst some more common birds. In the morning we found **Streak-throated Bush-tyrant**, **Smoky Bush-tyrant** and **Red-crested Cotinga** perched on top of dead trees within 300m of the parking. Spotlighting for 1h only yielded **Band-winged Nightjar**.

## Jocotoco – Reserva Yunguilla

**-3.23049, -79.27159**

Visited date: 6 July 2023

We reserved with Jocotoco and got the number from the ranger of Reserva Yunguilla. We agreed on meeting the ranger at the church at 07.00. Before 07.00 you have to pay an extra 35USD fee because the ranger has to wake up earlier (but only ±15USD actually goes to the ranger). We drove up with the ranger towards the gate and parked next to it (-3.230495, -79.271594). We then had to walk for about 20 minutes before we reached the feeder. Along the way we encountered **Little Woodstar**. It then took about 30 minutes before **Pale-headed Brushfinch** (e) came, besides multiple **Grey-browed Brushfinches** and **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta**. We had already heard **Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrush**, but it even came to the feeder. The endemic Brushfinch would come for a couple of minutes and then disappeared again for 15 minutes. The ranger knows some more territories in case the bird doesn't show up to the feeder.

## Jocotoco – Cerro de Arcos

**-3.56685, -79.45718**

Visited dates: 6-7 July 2023

From Reserva Yunguilla we drove to Cerro de Arcos, and arrived about 2.5h later. The road begins very well but deteriorates all the way until the destination; first its good pavement, then smooth gravel, then a bit bumpy and after the turnoff (-3.5687, -79.43649), the road gets even worse. A 4x4 or a high clearance, powerful 2WD is recommended. If you don't have such a car, you might be better off parking it 1km before the top (-3.56507, -79.45163). This could also be a great camping place, although it does get cold at night and there is a great and affordable refugio at the top. After this the road gets worse and there is no point to turn around if you change your mind. On the way up we encountered **Paramo Pipits** and already 2 **Blue-throated Hillstars** (e). Near the top we observed **Paramo Ground-tyrant** and **Black-billed Shrike-tyrant**.

We parked at the top, then went through the little gate and followed the right trail towards a viewpoint (-3.566718, -79.458296). From there we could oversee a shrubby part with lots of flowers, and from there we observed at least 5 **Blue-throated Hillstars**! Also present and seen from the same point were **Shining Sunbeam**, **Black-tailed Trainbearer**, **Grass wren** and **Many-striped Canastero**.

We continued the next morning towards Zaruma. That road is not that good either, but luckily it's paved after the village Salvias (-3.63709, -79.54878). Zaruma is a bit of a maze to drive through, so pay special attention to one-way streets.



**Blue-throated Hillstar**



**Pale-headed Brushfinch**

## **Jocotoco – Reserva Umbrellabird** [-3.65395, -79.76807](#)

**Visited dates:** 7-9 July 2023

Driving towards the Jocotoco Umbrellabird reserve we first passed Jardín de Colibris ([-3.653769, -79.737656](#)), which is also owned by Jocotoco. Unfortunately it was raining, so we visited again the next two mornings. We parked in front of the locked gate and climbed over it. The first morning it was very foggy and raining. Still we heard and observed (silhouettes of) 9 **El Oro Parakeets** (e) at

06.50 (-3.649791, -79.738914). They came from a location with a nest box, but we weren't sure if they used that one to sleep in. Later that morning we heard **Ochraceous Attila** (ne) from that point far away into the valley. A day later we heard it downwards towards the parking lot. The second morning we only heard the Parakeets from the abandoned house up the hill. There we got good views of **Loja Tyrannulet** and amongst the hummingbirds feeding on the flowers around the house was one **White-throated Daggerbill**. Other good birds we observed along the road up the hill are **Rufous-headed Chachalaca** (ne), **Line-cheeked Spinetail**, **Yellow-bellied Siskin** and **Olive-crowned Yellowthroat**. The hummingbird garden was not maintained and the feeders weren't filled.

There are two entrances to the lodge, of which the west one is the best - but still crappy with deep holes - (entrance at -3.65212, -79.79486). We birded this western entrance from the bridge towards the lodge and in two days observed 4 **Grey-backed Hawks** (ne) (at least 3 different individuals). **Northern Schiffornis** was surprisingly common inside the forest and seen multiple times, where we had trouble finding this species at all in other locations. We also finally added **Song Wren** to our world travel list and observed the species multiple times. **Central American Agouti** was observed twice and **Ecuadorian Mantled Howlers** were heard only. The hummingbird feeders at the lodge (-3.65395, -79.76807) weren't great, but still we observed **Violet-throated Hummingbird** and **Emerald-bellied Woodnymph** (ne).



**Long-wattled Umbrellabird**



**Emerald-bellied Woodnymph**

Walking the eastern entrance road from the lodge we encountered nice bird activity, including **Checker-throated Stipplethroat**, a flock with **Ochre-breasted Tanager** and quite some **Club-winged Manakins** (-3.650387, -79.763725). Around 16.00 we went towards the lek of the Umbrellabirds (entrance of trail at -3.652515, -79.762356). Arriving at the lek (-3.654105, -79.763948) we didn't hear anything yet, even though they already started calling around this hour in the north of Ecuador. Luckily our time waiting was filled by **Brownish Twistwings** that passed by and we even heard the wing sonation. Around 16.40 the first **Long-wattled Umbrellabird** started calling and 10 minutes later the first showed up at the lek. This one only had a short wattle, and was soon chased away by a stunning male with a very long wattle. We were able to observe it calling for at least 30 minutes. The views were way better compared to the lek in the north, so we definitely recommend going here!

At night we spotlighted the eastern entrance road for 1h. Around the lodge there were **Black-and-white Owls** hunting under the light of the street lantern. We encountered another one of these owls farther east. Mammal-wise we only encountered **Central American Woolly Opossum**, but in good numbers; 4 individuals total!



**Black-and-white Owl**



**Central American Woolly Opossum**

We headed south missing two target species: **Ecuadorian Plumeleeter** (ne, possible split from White-vented Plumeleeter) and **Three-banded Warbler** (ne). We were able to find them by making different stops along Ruta 585 (Via Loja – Portovelo). The Warblers were found at our first stop ([-3.843831, -79.572153](#)) and the Plumeleeter was finally found in the small village Zambi with many flowering trees ([-3.914469, -79.535675](#)) after making many stops. Other birds encountered during the many stops were **Loja Tyrannulet** (ne), **Watkins's Antpitta** (ne) and **Long-billed Starthroat**.

## El Empalme

[-4.14834, -79.86198](#)

**Visited date:** 9 July 2023

Around El Empalme we made some stops for White-headed Brushfinch. We couldn't find it at our first stop ([-4.148737, -79.848796](#)), but did hear **Tumbes Sparrow**. At our second stop ([-4.148349, -79.861984](#)) we had to walk quite far west to finally encounter **White-headed Brushfinch**. Along the way we observed **White-edged Oriole** and **Tumbes Hummingbird**. The Brushfinch was easily encountered when getting out of the car at our third stop ([-4.147332, -79.889348](#)) and again a couple of 100m farther west up the road.



Collared Antshrike



White-headed Brushfinch

## Jocotoco – Reserva Jorupe

[-4.38129, -79.89534](#)

Visited dates: 10 & 13 July 2023

On the first day we birded along the road east of the actual Jocotoco reserve, the road known as Via Achima (starting at -4.38767, -79.896015). As it had rained the clayish road was a bit slippery, and we decided to park it not too far up the road (-4.38131, -79.895481). Drinking a coffee as it was still foggy, we taped in **Blackish-headed Spinetail** (ne) right at the parking spot. For the first morning we decided to walk up for 1.8km, until just after the switchbacks where the habitat got more agricultural-dominated. It didn't take long before we encountered **Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner** (-4.381666, -79.893990), which were heard again at the exact spot 3 days after. In the same shrubs we observed **Speckle-breasted Wren**, and in the trees above **Ecuadorian Piculet**. Again a couple of 100m farther we had a band of **White-tailed Jays** in the trees, and these too were observed at the exact same spot 3 days later. Walking up we observed **Elegant Crescentchest** often, with its gecko-like calls. In a big bend (-4.377367, -79.892128) we got to observe both **Pale-browed Tinamou** and **Watkins's Antpitta**. Both required a fair amount of time waiting in the hot sun with our heads near the shrubs before we finally got decent views. In this bend and farther towards the switchbacks is where we observed **Rufous-necked Foliage-gleaners**. At the switchbacks we found **Ecuadorian Plumeleteer** and **Saffron Siskin**.

From our parking spot we got to see **Grey-cheeked Parakeets** (ne), **King Vulture** and **Hook-billed Kite** fly over. Walking down to the main road in the afternoon we focussed on finding Slaty Becard, but didn't get to see it. We did encounter **Yellow-tailed Oriole** and some more common Tumbes-endemics like **White-edged Oriole**, **Tumbes Pewee** and **Plumbeous-backed Thrush**. At night we heard at least 6 different **Peruvian Screech-owls** fairly close to each other on this part of the road. We eventually got to observe one right next to the road (-4.382810, -79.894684). Three days later we did the same walk on one morning, focussing only on **Slaty Becard** (ne). This time it responded at the

switchbacks (be careful for the somewhat similar-sounding **Streak-headed Woodcreeper**, which is common here). We finally got to see two females lower down towards the main road.



Peruvian Screech-owl



Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner

## Jocotoco – Reserva Atuana

[-4.36706, -79.7176](#)

Visited dates: 11 & 12 July 2023

On the way to Reserva Atuana we walked along the E69 road at two locations (-4.341511, -79.763609 and -4.349501, -79.749864). At the first stop we observed **Loja Tyrannulet**, but not the hoped for **Piura Hemispingus**. On the second spot we heard **Grey-headed Antbird** (ne), saw **White-winged Brushfinch** and got a glimpse of **Black-cowled Saltator**.

We then continued, turned off (-4.3654, -79.71601) towards the reserve and parked at the entrance (-4.36706, -79.717603). From there we walked the entrance road and heard **Grey-headed Antbird** again, but it wouldn't come closer. I didn't bother to crawl underneath the barbwire, as I thought we would encounter more of them (which we didn't that morning). One can drive all the way towards the end with a 4x4, after which a trail goes very steeply down (-4.36641, -79.725602). Along this steep trail down grows lots of bamboo, and that is where we observed **Piura Hemispingus**. We came back the day after and again walked from the entrance towards this trail. After a lot of effort and waiting in the bamboo, finally we got glimpses of a male **Grey-headed Antbird**. Sneaky, Tapaculo-like behaviour how it crawled through the bamboo, only responding every now and then. Other birds observed along the steep trail are **White-throated Quail-dove** and **Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrush** (HO).

We did go to the feeders, but these were almost empty. Still they attracted some hummers like **Rainbow Starfrontlet** and **Purple-throated Sunangel**; both of which we had observed along the steep bamboo trail.



Piura Hemispingus



Croaking Ground Dove

## Quilanga - El Sauce

-4.32618, -79.37995

Visited dates: 11-12 July 2023

We had read that Ecuadorian Viscacha was only known from Cerro el Ahuaca (-4.308525, -79.546591) near the town Cariamanga. Besides a research paper we didn't have any info on where and when to look specifically. Via iNaturalist we came into contact with someone who said that the Viscachas at the Cerro were all killed, captured or disturbed too much by tourism. We also heard this story via a local researcher, and this didn't get our hopes up. Fortunately we got in contact with biologist Jimmy Japón (+593 960 532 240, Spanish) who lives in El Sauce, only 18km east of Cerro el Ahuaca as the crow flies. As he was out in Napo we were welcome to come to the house of his family in El Sauce (-4.326188, -79.379959). On their land they have a small rocky outcrop where some Viscachas live (-4.328595, -79.36778). We walked there the first afternoon via a treacherous trail. We saw fresh tracks; plants being gnawed on and fresh sand before a burrow. We waited until just for dark, but observed nothing. There were some more options around, but we didn't have sufficient information which one was best. Jimmy said before that the second location was better, but that was a 2h drive and another 0.5h walk according to others. Also the observation distance would be 400m according to him, but afterwards on Google Maps I measured it more like 200m. After calling with a researcher that studied the Viscachas for 3 months, we decided to go back to the same location early morning again. We started walking at 05.00 and arrived around 05.45 at a viewpoint without having to walk too many steep cliff sides (-4.32822, -79.368498). We could already make out Viscacha shapes on the thermal camera, and with the flashlight we were able to observe at least 3 **Ecuadorian Viscachas** (e) from a distance of about 100m. The guide said we should try closer, but pointed to a trail going through a steep valley. Romy stayed behind and I continued, and was eventually able to observe them from about 20m distance. With Romy still on the other side I asked the guide to hold the flashlight for a record shot, but somehow he couldn't aim right. The Viscachas went inside their burrows and didn't get out anymore. He said the sun would hit this part around 08.00, so we waited.. and waited...and waited. Until around 10.30 we finally saw the sun coming

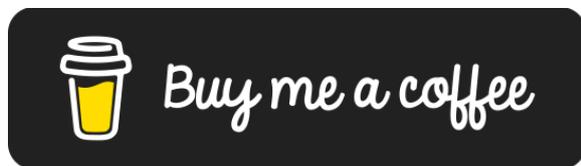
from behind the rocky outcrop, but of course the burrows of the Viscachas were on the exact opposite side of the rock. We waited for another hour, but decided it was hopeless. Too bad we didn't get good info. 07.00-08.00 was supposed to be a great time.. but as the sun never hits this part in the morning we don't think they actually come out here.

We would advise anybody wanting to try for the Ecuadorian Viscacha to go to the second place. We haven't been there, but got all the info including maps etc. The viewpoint (-4.320095, -79.350245) is 0.5h walk downhill from a gravel road. The Viscachas are on the other side of the valley, about 200m southsouthwest (-4.321344, -79.351157). Even though it's a bigger viewing distance, Jimmy said they normally see the family (3-5 ind.) sunbathing in the morning around 07.00-08.00. Being there very early at least allows you to see them with the thermal camera and flashlight.

There is enough flat space to camp with multiple tents on the terrain of the Japón family. The only hotels nearby are in Quilanga (-4.29611, -79.40191) and from there it's about 24km towards the second location.

## You made it! Thank you for reading 😊

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All observations made by us in Ecuador can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of about 959 bird species and 36 mammal species in Ecuador. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

Our Top 10	Birds	Mammals
1	Jocotoco Antpitta	Pacarana
2	Harpy Eagle	Spectacled Bear
3	Peruvian Antpitta	Mountain Tapir
4	Fiery-throated Fruiteater	Golden-mantled Tamarin
5	Spectacled Prickletail	Red-mantled Saddle-backed Tamarin
6	Chestnut-belted Gnateater	Mountain Paca
7	Black-spotted Bare-eye	Olinguito
8	Lunulated Antbird	Ecuadorian Viscacha
9	Red-faced Parrot	Amazon Dwarf Squirrel
10	Orange-throated Tanager	White-bellied Spider Monkey

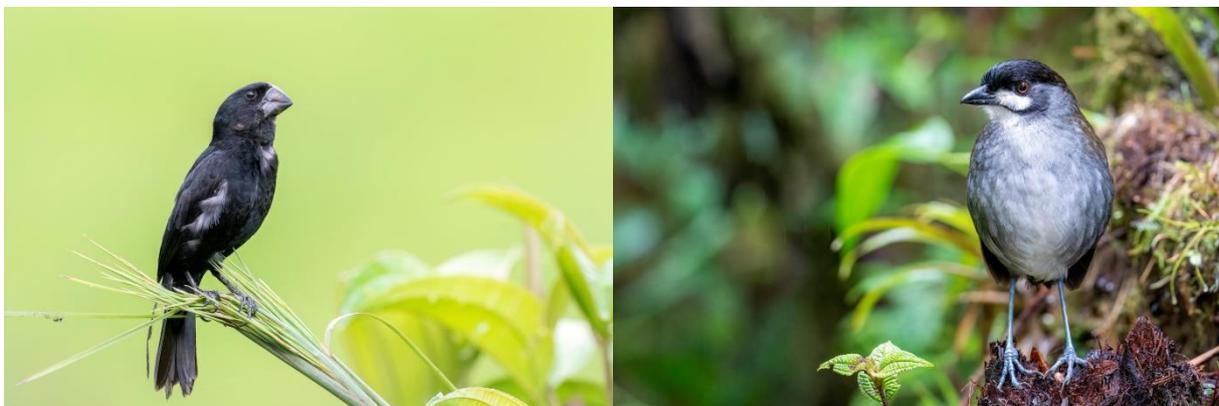
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Common Woolly Monkey

Linnaeus's Two-toed Sloth



Black-billed Seed Finch

Jocotoco Antpitta



**Golden-tailed Sapphire**



**Harpy Eagle**



**Fawn-breasted Brilliant**



**White-booted Racket-tail**



**Western Dwarf Squirrel**



**Pacarana**