

RIP REPORT

NEW JERSEY AUDUBON

February 7 – 20, 2009

Organized by New Jersey Audubon Society

**Ecuadorian Tour Operator –
Neblina Forest**

Saturday, February 7: After a nice breakfast in the Hotel Sebastian, our driver Eduardo, drove the group to Yanacocha Reserve – about an hour from Quito. This large area of polylepis woodland, on the slopes of Pichincha Volcano, provided a great introduction to our first full day of birding in Ecuador. This reserve is operated by the Jocotoco



Foundation which was established to protect land of critical importance to the conservation of Ecuador's endangered birds and associated biodiversity.

Our group was fortunate to engage the talents and time of Neblina Forest owners, Xavier Muñoz-Contreras and Mercedes Rivadeneira for the day. As we drove the road up to the reserve we stopped several times for birds along the way. The ubiquitous Great Thrush gave us great views – which continued throughout the trip.

At one spot we watched numerous Brownbellied Swallows and were able to draw in a Brown-backed Chat Tyrant. We had distant looks at Black-chested Buzzard-eagle and an Azara's Spinetail gave brief looks as it rushed across a break in the vegetated hillside. Upon arriving at the reserve gate, we were greeted by a local conservation guard and we began a relaxed walk along the main trail which follows the Inca Trail for a distance. Hummingbird feeder stations were strategically placed along the trail at intervals and these provided great looks at

Black, Glossy and Masked Flowerpiercers, Buff-winged Starfrontlet and Sapphirevented Puffleg.

The trail was fairly level – which was welcomed since most folks had not acclimated to the high elevation yet. Although we arrived fairly late in the morning ~ 10:00 a.m., we were able to get lovely looks at Spectacled Whitestart in the telescope, Rufous Wren and Hooded Mountain Tanager. By the time we reached the last set of feeders, thick misty clouds had settled on the mountainside, but it didn't mask the nice looks at Swordbilled Hummingbird along with Golden-breasted Puffleg and a female Great Sabrewing.

After the birding, we had a late lunch at Tianguéz in the old section of Quito. This open-air restaurant, on the edge of San Francisco square, provided great food and lots of Ecuadorian ambiance. Afterwards, we joined Gustavo, another Neblina Forest guide, who took the group on a short walking tour of the old town.



Sunday, February 8, 2009: 6:00 a.m. start time. Today we were introduced to Alejandro Solano who was going to be our guide for the rest of the tour. This young Costa Rican native impressed the group early on with his quiet manner and extraordinary natural history and birding knowledge. With the sun barely up; we headed to the eastern slope of the Andes toward

Antisana Reserve.

On the way to the reserve we were able to catch glimpses of Cotopaxi Volcano – a perfectly formed volcanic cone. We spent the morning birding the road up to Hacienda Antisana (~13,000 feet in elevation) where we had lunch. We started slow as did the birds; it was cold and windy; our views of the birds were distant – American Kestrel high up on the ridge; flyby Green-tailed and Black-tailed Trainbearers and Bert pulled out a Giant Hummingbird as we scanned the hillsides.

We took the opportunity to learn about the various ecotones as we traveled the road - temperate forest to elfin forest to

grassland paramo to shrub and cushion paramo and we encountered *chagras* (Andean cowboys) along the way. We stopped several times along the road to search for (and find) Hooded Siskin, Plumbeous Sierra-finch, Black-billed Shrike-tyrant, Plain-breasted Seedeater and we had our first looks at Variable (Red-backed) Hawk and juvenile Carunculated Caracara. Larry and Lesley alerted us to a Shining Sunbeam – beautiful orangey hummingbird clinging to branches as it fed. We speculate that this feeding strategy enabled the bird to expend less energy at this high elevation. We stopped at a river crossing to watch Ecuadorian Hillstars and had good, but distant views of Cinereous Conebill and Tufted Tit-tyrant.

As we continued to climb in elevation, we also stopped at the “bird house”, an abandoned thatched-roofed mountain house that had Blackwinged Ground-doves perched on its roof. We saw Bar-winged and Stout-billed Cinclodes and better views of Plumbeous Sierra-finch. Up and over the pass...we stopped at the top to scan



for Andean Condor on the ridge. A distant view of one gave us the tick, but after we descended into the vast expanse of paramo to look for Andean Teal and other high elevation gems, we were treated to six condors floating overhead with a Cinereous Harrier mixed in for good luck! On the high paramo, we stopped to look at all forms of Carunculated Caracara dotting the landscape as well as the beautiful Andean Gulls. It was fascinating to see a flock of high flying gulls in front of the snow-shrouded volcanic cone of Antisana. We had great views of several small flocks of Andean (black-faced) Ibis out on the grassy plain.

The Hacienda Antisana we had close-up views of Paramo Ground-tyrant (which looks like a cross between a mockingbird and a wheatear). Lunch was fabulous – hot tea, tamale and a lovely kinua and potato soup. After lunch we continued to Laguna Micacocha – along the way we had several Andean Lapwings, lots of Brazilian rabbits, and once we got closer to the lake there were views of Silvery Grebe, Andean Teal, Yellow-billed Pintail, Andean Coot, a Greater Yellowlegs and on the way out two distant Andean

Ruddy-ducks. All in all a wonderful day of birding.



Monday, February 9, 2009:

We had a relaxed start to the day with breakfast at the Hotel Sebastian and then a short visit to the local artisan's market before boarding our plane to Coca. The 30-minute flight took us over the eastern spur of the Andes to Amazonia. Only Antisana Volcano was peaking through the puffy clouds. After a short ride to the Napo River, we piled into a motorized widebody canoe for a 2 and 1/2 hour ride downriver. We had lunch along the way and saw Osprey, Great and Snowy Egrets, Black and Greater Yellow-headed Vultures and White-winged Swallows. Some had looks at Swallow-winged Puffbirds perched and most got to see a beautiful soaring Swallow-tailed Kite.

We switched to a smaller motorized canoe to travel up the Yacu (a tributary to the Napo) into a blackwater oxbow lake upon whose shores Sani Lodge was perched. Although the birding along the Yacu was fairly quiet, we did get looks at a Tiny Hawk, Many-banded Aracari and Plumbeous Kite. The entrance to Sani Oxbow was magnificent. Our local Sani guides cut the motor and paddled us



across the lake to the dock. We were greeted by prehistoric Hoatzins while Russet-backed Oropendolas, Yellow-rumped Caciques, and Greater and Smooth-billed Anis raucously flew to pre-roosting sites; Larry spotted a black-mantled Tamarin moving through the tree branches across from the dock.

Once everyone got settled into their rooms, we convened on the dock to watch day turn to night. As dusk settled we watched Orange winged and Mealy Amazons head to roost; got looks at Turquoise Jay in the telescope; saw Red-capped Cardinals dive into the reeds; had a late flyover of Boat-billed Heron and saw

(and listened to) a Common Potoo which perched stump-like across the lake.

Just when you thought you couldn't see anymore, fishing and fruit bats appeared over the lake and we watched them fly close to the water's surface. A storm moved in overnight – lots of great night sounds in addition to thunder – potoo, Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Tropical Screech Owl, frogs, crickets and katydids.



Tuesday, February 10, 2009:

We spent the entire day in and around Sani Lodge. After a short boat ride to the Sani Lodge camping area, we walked a short distance to the canopy tower. The tower was constructed around a ceiba tree and was 45 meters high, taking us to the tops of the trees. It was a misty morning. Birds that were in the spotting scope would be gone for a

moment and then back again as fog clouds drifted in and out of the tree branches. There were so many highlights.

Three species of aracari (Many-banded, Ivory-billed and Lettered), toucans, macaws and parrots; Plumthroated Cotinga, Bare-necked Fruitcrow, Blackfaced Dacnis, Green Honeycreeper, Slate-colored

Hawk (perched), Green and Gold Tanager and White-fronted Nunbird, which according to Alejandro often "leads the pack" for mixed flocks. It was a very dynamic birding morning. As the early morning merged into middle to late morning, the birds settled a bit and then we were able to look down on them as they moved through the upper portions of the canopy. Pink-throated Becard, Black-tailed Tityra, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Whitelored Euphonia, Opal-rumped Tanager, Zimmer's Flatbill and Golden-faced Tyrannulet. After leaving the tower around 11:30, we walked the "tower trail" back to the Sani Lodge grounds. This back trail, provided us with opportunities to see Collared Puffbird (what a bird!) and White-chinned Jacamar.

After lunch, we took a break for a few hours, but those of us who wanted to continued birding from the dock and the bar area where there is a beautiful vista



overlooking the Challuachocha (fish lake) which in the local indigenous language of Kichwa means "fish lake." Scopes were trained on White-eared Jacamars, Capped Heron, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Greater and Smooth-billed Anis and Red-capped Cardinals. Louise took a swim in the lake and managed to elude both the caiman and the local Hoatzin family.

Around 3:30 we reassembled on the dock to board the dugout canoes for our late afternoon adventure. Our Sani guides (Carlos (Churi), Rodriego, and Eustavio) paddled the group to a private trail – Daniel's Trail – to look for more treasures, among them the Rufous Potoo. We were rewarded with fabulous looks at this magnificent bird. It was roosting about 15 feet off the ground, hanging onto a branch and looking like a spent cecropia leaf. As the breeze blew softly, the potoo also moved ever so slightly so that it looked just like a dried up cecropia leaf therefore not attracting attention to itself. We spent the waning hours of the day floating around the cocha, watching Black-capped Donacobious, Hoatzin and Silver-beaked Tanagers. It was extremely peaceful – no planes, no motors, no cars, just bird sound and frog sound.



Wednesday, February 11, 2009:

A ferocious thunder and lightning storm moved in overnight. It was impressive and there was lots of rain. It was still raining in the early a.m., but we were convinced that it was going to stop. It did....for a while and we were able visit Sani Isla, an island in the middle of the Napo River with *varzea* habitat. Out on the mud/sand flats

there were Black Caracara and Pied Plover and we had birds perched around the edges - Yellow-browed Sparrow, Mottled-backed Elaenia (which would be more aptly named "Horned Elaenia"), Chestnut-bellied Seedeater, Grayish Saltator and the magnificent Blackbird Oriole.

Once we dipped into the seasonally flooded *varzea* habitat, the birding became much more difficult as the trail was single file through tall reeds. We were able to see Olivespotted Hummingbird and some saw Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Fuscous Flycatcher and Short-crested Flycatcher.

By the time we made it off the island and started toward Yasuni National Park where the clay licks were, it started to rain. The two clay lick sites had covered viewing areas which was very nice as it just poured. At the first site, the entire cliff face was exposed clay.

The parrots we saw there included Blue-headed, Mealy, Yellow-crowned and Dusky-headed. There also happened to be a boa constrictor hanging from one of the distant trees. The second site was smaller; we ate lunch there and watched Scarletshouldered Parrotlets trying to keep dry. Apparently the parrots eat the clay to counteract toxins in the seeds they ingest. The ride back to Sani in an open, motorized canoe was rough, but we did get good looks at Laddertailed Nightjar, roosting on a horizontal reed stem about eye-level and a cooperative (and I believe reliable) Great Potoo was perched along the river as well. With all the rain, the current coming out of oxbow lake was intense.

Our Sani guides and boatmen were masterful and we reached the relative calm of the lake through their efforts and with a little help from Lesley who valiantly bailed out the canoe. Although we tried to keep dry, I don't think there was one of us who had more than a square inch that didn't get soaked through.



Thursday, February 12, 2009: The rain broke for the morning so we could get out for several hours. It was lovely – we paddled to the other end of the oxbow lake and meandered upstream through wooded, and now flooded, lowlands. The entire morning was spent in the canoes and although it got a little cramped, we saw great birds. It was the morning of "ant-things."

Our target bird was the Cocha Antshrike which was a life bird for everyone there – including Alejandro. We got to see both male and female birds. We also saw Spot-winged Antshrike, and Warbling, Silvered, Plumbeous and White-shouldered Antbirds; some saw Pygmy Antwren. A troop of squirrel monkeys scampered through the trees alongside the waterway and we watched as the clamored, jumped and almost flew from branch

to branch. Red howler monkeys were seen lounging in a very distant tree top. We had been hearing them in the morning, but it was nice to see them was well.

We took a short walk in mid morning on the Chorongó Trail or "monkey trail." The night monkey was in its roost tree; its humanlike face peered eerily from the hollowed cavity and as we returned to the lodge, we got great looks at long-nosed bats which were roosting on vertical sticks in the lake. Our best efforts to bird in the afternoon were washed out – we were hoping to return to the canopy tower,



but more rain and a thunderstorm thwarted that. People got some down time and we were able to take a nice night hike after dinner. Eustavio pointed out all sorts of interesting creatures – spiders, crickets, millipedes and even a small treefrog.



Friday, February 13, 2009:

Friday, the 13th started with an Umbrellabird. Actually it wasn't the first bird of the day, but it certainly was the first one we all remember! A small group of us returned to the Napo River to search for the bird – thinking that we would be able to walk Sani Island, where they are sometimes seen. Instead, when we reached the Napo, we found the

island almost completely submerged. The rain had dramatically changed the river's footprint and all that was available was to ride the edges of the islands in search of birds from boat. The current was tremendous and once again, kudos to the marvelous boating skills of the Sani guides, all of us were able to get great views of perched male and female Amazonian Umbrellabird. After this

treat, we rejoined the rest of the Sani Lodge visitors and transferred to the larger motorized river boat for our return journey to Coca.

While waiting at the airport, we did manage to see Pearl Kite from the airport lounge. Once back in Quito, we met Eduardo and from there we started the next leg of our journey – crossing over to the west slope of the Andes and the Mindo Valley. On the way we stopped for a picnic lunch at the Equatorial Monument outside of Quito. This tourist site also had some good birds and we added Vermillion Flycatcher to the list as well as great looks at Sparkling Violetear and the ubiquitous Rufous-collared Sparrow. We arrive at Sachatamia Lodge by late afternoon in the rain. Accommodations are mixed between the second and third stories of the lodge and remote cabins.

There are hummingbird and fruit feeders around the lodge – each one providing great, close-up views of some of the region’s specialties. Within a few minutes we have seen more than ten species of hummingbirds – Velvet Purple Coronet, Andean Emerald, Booted

Racket-tail, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Brown Violetear, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Brown Inca, Green-crowned Brilliant, Fawn-breasted Brilliant and Violet-tailed Sylph.



Saturday, February 14, 2009:

We drove downslope from Sachatamia about ½ hour to Milpe Road and into Cloud Forest Reserve. We emerged from the clouds (and rain) for the morning and were able to walk the first portion of Milpe Road ~650 meters to the entrance of the reserve. It took us several hours to do that short distance! The road is elevated in

places and provides great vantage points for treetop birding as well as wide open vistas for watching flocks of parrots, pigeons and raptors. Our first new bird was Scrub Blackbird and we heard Pacific Hornero, although did not see one that first day. Had great scope views of Ruddy Pigeon and flyby views of Band-tailed Pigeon and flocks of Maroon-tailed (Choco) Parakeet and Bronze-winged Parrots.

We had four woodpeckers along the road – Black-cheeked, Smoky-brown, Scarlet-backed and the giant Guayaquil. Our slow progress

along the road yielded a great variety of flycatchers – Ornate Flycatcher, Bran-colored and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Dusky-

capped and Rusty-margined Flycatchers, Eastern Wood-pewee and Smoke-colored Pewee as well as the ever present Tropical Kingbird. The group did very well with warblers – not only did we see some of “our” warblers including Cerulean, Blackpoll, Black-and-White and American Redstart, but we became more and more impressed with the numbers of Blackburnian Warblers seen.

It seemed like almost every quick movement in a tree yielded one.

We intersected with a few mixed flocks that included tanagers and other smaller passerines. Fawn-breasted, Golden, Silver-throated, Beryl-spangled, Blue-necked, Bay-headed, Blue-grey and Palm Tanagers gave great looks. We saw perched Purple Honeycreeper, Swallow Tanager, Thick-billed Euphonia, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Buff-throated and Black-winged Saltators and also were treated to Yellow-collared Chlorophonia. Once in the reserve, there are hummingbird feeders set up as well, but we made a point of walking the trails before the birds settled down for the day.

The trails wound their way through “shade-grown” coffee and we stopped at various overlooks before dropping down into the forest. Got to watch soaring Swallow-tailed and Plumbeous Kites and had great looks at Barred Hawk. The forest was pretty closed in and it was difficult to get all participants on the skulking birds; most of the group managed to see a Buff-rumped Warbler and Immaculate Antbird.

We ate lunch watching the many species frequenting the feeders. We ended up with a 17 hummingbird species day. Some of the additional species included White-whiskered Hermit, Whitenecked Jacobin, Green Thorntail, Green-crowned Woodnymph, Empress Brilliant and Purple-throated Woodstar.

After lunch we drove the road a ways, looking for perched birds. We didn’t have a lot of success, but we were able to get great looks at Yellow-bellied and Variable Seedeaters, Ecuadorian Thrush and the lovely Masked Watertyrant. Once we returned back to Sachatamia, some folks took a little bit of down time, while others walked the dirt road across the street from the lodge. It was at the end of the day so light was not fantastic, but still gave us some great looks at Red-headed Barbet and Crimson-rumped Toucanets (which were new for the trip). As we started back up the road, it began to

rain again and continued throughout the night.



Sunday, February 15, 2009:

This morning's 4:00 a.m. wake-up call came very early! We left at 4:45 to meet Angel Paz to look for Cock-of-the-Rock and antpittas.

Alejandro was concerned about all the rain and the potential for landslides. As we picked our way up the paved road – and negotiated past several small landslides, we turned off onto a dirt road toward

our meeting place.

Our first challenge was to ford a raging stream; Angel helped direct the bus to the most solid spot for crossing. Once across we continued our slow progress up the mountain road in the dark until we came to a major landslide which crossed the entire road. It was impossible to go any further and Eduardo turned the bus around, gathered up all our participants, reforded the stream and headed out to the main road. It was just starting to get light out. Since it was still early, we opted to drive to another part of the Cloud Forest reserve called Silanche; it was about an hour and ½ drive.

Once there, we climbed the canopy tower and were treated to close up Purple-throated Fruitcrows calling and displaying and close Northern Violaceous Trogon. We got distant views at Choco Toucan. Along the road we finally saw Pacific Hornero and White-bearded Manakin and sorted through several small flocks of passerines. After a lovely morning we drove back toward Sachatamia and lunched at Mirador al Blanco, a great restaurant perched high above the Rio Blanco. Lunch was fabulous and while we dined, there were Golden and Silver-throated Tanagers, Pale-mandibled Aracari, Red-faced Spinetail and Fred picked out a Pallid Dove skulking under the feeders.

It was a long day with an early start, but some of the group opted to keep on birding and we drove to the Old Nono Mindo Road which up until the late 1990's was the only road across the Andes to Quito. This slightly morethan- one-lane dirt



road was not traveled much any more which made it ideal for birding. The clouds had settled in pretty heavy and light was waning a bit, but we encountered a fantastic feeding flock that kept us occupied for about 90 minutes. Spotted Barbtail, Pearled Treerunner, Crimson-backed Woodpecker, Grass-green Tanager, Western Hemisphingus, Flame-faced Tanager, Blue-necked and Hooded Mountain-tanagers, Lemon-rumped Tanager, White-lined Tanager and Dusky Bushtanager made up the flock. In addition to the flock, we did get views of Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan which was one of the target birds for this region. Our descent off the mountain was a little less relaxed. Apparently the continued rain caused more landslides on the main road and weekenders heading back to Quito couldn't negotiate the Andes crossing so they were using this old road. As we were coming down, long lines of cars, trucks and buses were coming up. Eduardo did a fantastic job getting us back to Sachatamia by about 6:30 p.m.

Monday, February 16, 2009:

The unprecedented rain continued to wreck havoc. We tried again to reach Angel Paz, but this time there was a line of traffic backed up along the road (mostly busses and trucks). Apparently where the big landslide was, several buses had gotten stuck and closed the road completely. Now we know why there was so much traffic taking the Old Nono Mindo Road the previous night.

Even if we were able to squeak our way past the line of traffic to get the Angel Paz's road, there was nothing to assure us that the landslide from yesterday was cleared or there were no additional slides. Instead, we opted to go back to Milpe Road, but it was raining too hard, so ditched the morning for a leisurely breakfast and some birding on the lodge grounds. Everyone got great looks at Flame-faced Tanager and Blue-winged Mountain-tanagers and two Toucan Barbets came into the fruit feeders for all to see.

Later in the morning we drove the road down into the Mindo Valley itself, through the town and across several bridges to some other birding sites. We did see White-capped Dipper and on the way back up to Sachatamia, we had great looks at Black-and-White Hawk-Eagle, apparently only the 4th record of this species for the Mindo area.

Later in the afternoon, around 3:30, we drove back down to Milpe Road and took a walk at the Cloud Forest Reserve. We saw

many of the same birds as we did the first day we were there, but it was great review and some folks got to see species that they missed the first time around. We did add Guira and Ochre-breasted Tanagers to the trip list. As we were getting ready to leave the reserve, we were lucky to watch several Summer Tanagers hawking insects from the top of a tree. This was really interesting behavior to watch since none of us had seen them do this on their nesting grounds here in NJ. We also had an Olive-crowned Yellowthroat out in the field across from the parking area.

The rain continued this evening and we lost power. Apparently a generator was taken out in one of the landslides and repair crews could not get to it. The lodge has a generator which they used, although electricity was only provided for the main lodge and did not reach the outlying cabins. Despite this small inconvenience, we had a great meal, played some billiards and enjoyed the camaraderie.



Tuesday, February 17, 2009:

We woke to cloudless skies with both the Southern Cross and Big Dipper easily seen from the lodge parking lot. We left very early to try again for Andean Cock-of-the-Rock. Alejandro had talked with Angel Paz who counted 10 landslides on the road that we would need to take to get to him. Instead, we visited another site, owned by a

gentleman by the name of Rolando. Rolando guided us up the mountain in the dark. It was quite a climb – over streams, through cow pastures and up into cloud forest, but eventually we made it to the lek site. We stood quietly in the forest as dawn unfolded and the Cock-of-the-Rocks started calling. With patience and effort, everyone in the group was able to get great looks at these bizarre-looking, blood-red beauties. Once we were all satisfied and the birds started to drift off, we climbed down the mountain and headed back to the lodge to have a quick breakfast, pack and get on the road. There were concerns about getting back over the pass to Quito before it started raining again.

As it was, Eduardo navigated numerous small landslides that had piled out onto the main road and once we made it past the huge

landslide that had taken out a large section of the road a week prior to our arrival, we found ourselves sitting in a long line of parked traffic.

The road across the Andes was closed while crews cleared the road enough of mud, trees and rocks to allow one lane of traffic to proceed. Some folks had been in line since 6:00 a.m. At about 11:30 traffic started moving and we were able to cross back over the western slope of the Andes. Alejandro counted 56 landslides from that point until we got over the slope to the outskirts of Quito. We learned later that our timing was critical since the road was closed soon after that due to more rain and more landslides.

We cut through Quito and headed east toward Pappallacta Pass (about 13,000 feet) and arrived at our lodge, Termas de Pappallacta around 3:30 or so. We were greeted by a Shining Sunbeam which was obliging enough to give folks scope views. It was a nice treat to take a soak in the thermal pools situated outside of each of our rooms.



Wednesday, February 18, 2009:

We spend the early morning on the road behind the lodge that went up to the entrance to Cayambe Coca Ecological Reserve. It was a beautiful setting – steep cliff faces, waterfalls, misty clouds and lush green vegetation. As we got up to the elfin forest, we encountered a family group of Black-backed Bush-tanagers (which looked like big

chickadees) and Blue-winged, Hooded and Black-chinned Mountain-tanagers. We also got nice looks at Viridian Metaltail, a high elevation specialty.

After breakfast at the lodge, we packed up and drove down slope about 20 minutes to Guango Lodge which is right off the main road. This site is also a hummingbird paradise and we spent time looking at the many different species common to the eastern slope of the Andes. We also took a nice 2 and ½ hour walk on the property down to the river. We were able to follow two feeding flocks, one for about an hour! Just amazing – Blue and Black Tanagers, Pearled Treerunner, Blue-backed Conebill, Pale-naped Brush-finch, Black-capped Hemisphingus, Hooded

Mountain-tanager, Rufous-backed Chat-tyrant with numerous Spectacled Whitestarts and Black-crested Warblers.

On the river we got great views of Torrent Duck and another White-capped Dipper. We continued to walk a bit to meet our driver and we encountered the second feeding flock. This time they were moving along a hillside which gave great viewing opportunities. Cinnamon

Flycatcher was extremely cooperative and we got excellent looks at an adult Plushcap feeding a youngster. It was quite cool all morning and somewhat damp, so lunch at the lodge with hot soup was a welcome stop. We spent about ½ hour looking at the hummingbird feeders and getting to know the “new” players – Chestnutbreasted

and Buff-tailed Coronets, Collared Inca, Tourmaline Sunangel, Long-tailed Sylph, White-bellied Woodstar, Speckled Hummingbird and

Bronzy Inca. We even had a male and female Sword-billed Hummingbird coming to the feeders – quite comical.

Our last stop for the day was Cabanas San Isidro. We would stay here for the next several days. All the cabins are clustered around a central “courtyard” area with a common room, lounge and observation deck. Late in the afternoon we drove out the San Isidro (Las Caucheras) Road and birded along the way – saw Highland Motmot and Southern Lapwing; some had brief glimpses, but all heard the wonderful serenade of Wattled and Sickle-winged Guans.

We settled night in on the observation deck above the lounge waiting hoping to get a glimpse of Rufous-bellied Nighthawk (which we did see...barely), but more exciting was to hear a not-so-distant call of an Oilbird. We also heard San Isidro’s mystery owl, but did not track it down.



Thursday, February 19, 2009:

The group met, pre-dawn, outside the dining room. For the first hour and ½ we lingered around the “street light.” During the night, countless moths and other insects are drawn to the light and by dawn, they have settled onto leaves and tree limbs. The only problem is that the birds know they are there and at dawn it becomes a feeding frenzy. Highland

Motmot was the first bird we saw. Then came male and female Barred Becard, Sierran Elaenia, Streak-necked Flycatcher, Subtropical Cacique, Saffron-crowned Tanager, Olive-backed Woodcreeper, Montane Woodcreeper and of course, our friend, the Blackburnian Warbler. By 7:30 a.m., one of the San Isidro rangers had joined us and accompanied us to a lower trail behind the dining hall to look for White-bellied Antpitta.

The group was quiet and still and the ranger started calling the bird. Soon we heard it responding and soon after that we were treated to an adult and a young bird.

After breakfast, we walked the main road for several hours between raindrops. There were lots of beautiful flowers – some orchids – and we intersected with several flocks of birds including one that had Bluish Flowerpiercer, Cinnamon Flycatcher (such a cooperative bird!), Broadwinged Hawk, Saffron-crowned Tanager building a nest and some had a Crested Quetzal. Late in the afternoon we walked/drove Borja Road down to the Quijos River. Again, there were nice flocks of birds along the way – Bluenecked and Summer Tanagers, Golden-rumped Euphonia, Three-striped Warbler and some saw a Lemon-browed Flycatcher. The scenery was stunning, with cultivated fields in the foreground and distant forested mountains with long, hanging waterfalls. We got down to the bottom of this beautiful valley to find another raging river. But, Bert pulled out a Torrent Tyrannulet and we watched a Spotted “spotless” Sandpiper.

The highlight of most everyone’s day was watching a family of Torrent Ducks. First, the male was sighted, and then we saw the female with two mid-sized ducklings. As it was the end of the day the entire family group was working its way onto a large emergent boulder in the middle of the river. The male climbed up to the top of the boulder first and watched as the female and young climbed up, preened and then settled themselves in for the night.

On the way back to San Isidro we stopped along the main road at a known spot for Lyre-tailed Nightjar. Our group huddled along side the road and waited for darkness to descend. As it did, Alejandro used the flashlight to locate and young male bird on the cliff edge. Its tail draped down and its eyes glowing, all got to see it well. Last, but certainly not least, we found the San Isidro Mystery Owl once we got back to the lodge.



Friday, February 20, 2009:

On our last full day of birding, we started the day at Guacamayos (Macaw) Ridge about ½ hour from San Isidro. It was high elevation ~6,500 feet and relatively clear and cold for the first part of the morning. Birds were slow moving, but we got great looks at Green and Black Fruiteater right from the road.

We then dipped into the forest and followed the Jumandi Trail which hugged the ridge. The trail was cobblestones and mud; walking was difficult, but we were rewarded with wonderful looks at Northern Mountain-Cacique, Hooded Mountain-tanager and several flocks of birds moving through the treetops (some of which were eye level). Great looks at Saffron-crowned, Beryl spangled and Grass-green Tanagers. We had a small flock of Handsome Flycatchers which Lesley nicknamed "a cab of Handsome Flycatchers", a Streak-throated Flycatcher, Black-capped Hemisphingus and a Mountain Wren out in the open.

Afterwards, we drove down the other side of the mountain a ways. They are in the process of building a new road that goes from this pass down into the Amazon Basin. Much of the way we drove was one lane with newly poured concrete curing in the other lane. We stopped at an overlook to view the vast forested treetops and had some nice birds at long distance. The best was Vermillion Tanager. As we finished up, the clouds were just starting to pour over the mountain tops and by the time we got back to San Isidro to pack up and head back to Quito, the clouds and mist had moved in again.



We stopped at "mistical" Papallacta Lake for our picnic lunch and enjoyed our last look at Andean Teal and Andean Gull. We got back to Quito around 3:30 which gave people plenty of time to relax a bit before going out to our farewell dinner at *Tianguez*.

Total bird species seen: 462
Additional heard birds: 49
TOTAL SPECIES: 511

Ecuador February 7 - 20, 2009. 511 total bird species (Including 49 heard species)

Great Tinamou (h)	Carunculated Caracara
Undulated Tinamou (h)	Yellow-headed Caracara
Bartlett's Tinamou (h)	Barred Forest-Falcon (h)
Silvery Grebe	American Kestrel
Neotropic Cormorant	Bat Falcon
Anhinga	Speckled Chachalaca
Torrent Duck	Spix's Guan
Andean Teal	Common Piping-Guan
Yellow-billed Pintail	Wattled Guan
Andean Ruddy-Duck	Sickle-winged Guan
Least Bittern	Hoatzin
Rufescent Tiger-Heron	White-throated Crake (h)
Cocoi Heron	Gray-breasted Crake (h)
Great Egret	Azure Gallinule
Snowy Egret	Andean Coot
Cattle Egret	Sungrebe (h)
Striated Heron	Pied Plover
Capped Heron	Southern Lapwing
Boat-billed Heron	Andean Lapwing
Andean (Black-faced) Ibis	Greater Yellowlegs
Andean Condor	Spotted Sandpiper
King Vulture	Andean Gull
Black Vulture	Laughing Gull
Turkey Vulture	Yellow-billed Tern
Greater Yellow-headed Vulture	Rock Pigeon
Osprey	Band-tailed Pigeon
Swallow-tailed Kite	Pale-vented Pigeon
Pearl Kite	Plumbeous Pigeon
Snail Kite	Ruddy Pigeon
Slender-billed Kite	Eared Dove
Double-toothed Kite	Common Ground-Dove
Plumbeous Kite	Black-winged Ground-Dove
Cinereous Harrier	Salvin's White-tipped Dove
Plain-breasted Hawk	Gray-fronted Dove (h)
Tiny Hawk	Pallid Dove
Crane Hawk	White-throated Quail-Dove (h)
	Blue-and-yellow Macaw

Slate-colored Hawk	Scarlet Macaw
Barred Hawk	Chestnut-fronted Macaw
Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle	Red-bellied Macaw
Roadside Hawk	Dusky-headed Parakeet
Broad-winged Hawk	Maroon-tailed Parakeet
Short-tailed Hawk	Blue-winged Parrotlet
Red-backed Hawk (variable)	Cobalt-winged Parakeet
Puna Hawk (variable)	Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet
Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle	Black-headed Parrot
Black Hawk-Eagle	Blue-headed Parrot
Black Caracara	Red-billed Parrot
Orange-winged Amazon	White-capped Parrot
Scaly-naped Amazon	Bronze-winged Parrot
Mealy Amazon	Yellow-crowned Amazon
Squirrel Cuckoo	Bronzy Inca
Greater Ani	Brown Inca
Smooth-billed Ani	Collared Inca
Tropical Screech-Owl (h)	Buff-winged Starfrontlet
Rufescent Screech-Owl (h)	Sword-billed Hummingbird
Black-banded (San Isidro) Owl	Chestnut-breasted Coronet
Cloud-forest Pygmy Owl (h)	Buff-tailed Coronet
Crested Owl	Velvet-purple Coronet
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (h)	Tourmaline Sunangel
Oilbird (h)	Glowing Puffleg
Great Potoo	Sapphire-vented Puffleg
Common Potoo	Golden-breasted Puffleg
Rufous Potoo	Booted Racket-tail
Rufous-bellied Nighthawk	Black-tailed Trainbearer
Lyre-tailed Nightjar	Green-tailed Trainbearer
Ladder-tailed Nightjar	Tyrian Metaltail
White-collared Swift	Viridian Metaltail
Chestnut-collared Swift	Long-tailed Sylph
Gray-rumped Swift	Violet-tailed Sylph
Short-tailed Swift	Purple-crowned Fairy
Neotropical Palm-Swift	Long-billed Starthroat
Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift	Purple-throated Woodstar
Pale-tailed Barbthroat	White-bellied Woodstar
White-whiskered Hermit	Crested Quetzal
White-bearded Hermit	Golden-headed Quetzal
Reddish Hermit (h)	Choco Trogon
Black-throated Hermit	Amazonian White-tailed Trogon
White-necked Jacobin	Collared Trogon (h)
Brown Violet-ear	Masked Trogon
Sparkling Violet-ear	Amazonian Violaceous Trogon

Black-throated Mango	Northern Violaceous Trogon
Green Thorntail	Ringed Kingfisher
Green-crowned Woodnymph	Amazon Kingfisher
Olive-spotted Hummingbird	Green Kingfisher
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird	Blue-crowned Motmot (h)
Andean Emerald	Highland Motmot
Purple-chested Hummingbird	Broad-billed Motmot
Speckled Hummingbird	White-eared Jacamar
Purple-bibbed Whitetip	White-chinned Jacamar
Fawn-breasted Brilliant	Collared Puffbird
Empress Brilliant	Black-fronted Nunbird
Green-crowned Brilliant	White-fronted Nunbird
Ecuadorian Hillstar	Swallow-winged Puffbird
Giant Hummingbird	Orange-fronted Barbet
Shining Sunbeam	Gilded Barbet
Mountain Velvetbreast	Red-headed Barbet
Great Sapphirewing	Toucan Barbet
	Andean Toucanet
Crimson-rumped Toucanet	
Pale-mandibled Aracari	Straight-billed Woodcreeper
Ivory-billed Aracari	Buff-throated Woodcreeper
Lettered Aracari	Black-striped Woodcreeper (h)
Chestnut-eared Aracari	Olive-backed Woodcreeper
Many-banded Aracari	Streak-headed Woodcreeper
Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan	Montane Woodcreeper
Chestnut-mandibled Toucan (h)	Lineated Woodcreeper
Choco Toucan	Barred Antshrike (h)
White-throated Toucan	Cocha Antshrike
Channel-billed Toucan	Castelnau's Antshrike (h)
Olivaceous Piculet	Spot-winged Antshrike
Black-cheeked Woodpecker	Pygmy Antwren
Yellow-tufted Woodpecker	Pacific Antwren (h)
Smoky-brown Woodpecker	Plain-throated Antwren
Golden-olive Woodpecker	White-flanked Antwren
Crimson-mantled Woodpecker	Long-tailed Antbird (h)
Spot-breasted Woodpecker	Warbling Antbird
Scale-breasted Woodpecker	Silvered Antbird
Cream-colored Woodpecker	Plumbeous Antbird
Little Woodpecker	White-shouldered Antbird
Scarlet-backed Woodpecker	Immaculate Antbird
Lineated Woodpecker (h)	Chestnut-backed Antbird (h)
Crimson-crested Woodpecker	Black-headed Antthrush (h)
Guayaquil Woodpecker	Rufous-breasted Antthrush (h)
Bar-winged Cinclodes	Moustached Antpitta (h)

Stout-billed Cinclodes	Chestnut-crowned Antpitta
Pacific Hornero	White-bellied Antpitta
Azara's Spinetail	Yellow-breasted Antpitta (h)
Slaty Spinetail	Rufous Antpitta (h)
Rufous Spinetail	Tawny Antpitta (h)
Red-faced Spinetail	Ash-colored Tapaculo (h)
Ash-browed Spinetail	Blackish Tapaculo (h)
White-chinned Thistletail (h)	Equatorial Rufous-vented Tapaculo (h)
Streaked Tuftedcheek	Spillman's Tapaculo (h)
Pearled Treerunner	Green-and-black Fruiteater
Spotted Barbtail	White-browed Purpletuft
Lineated Foliage-gleaner	Cinereous Mourner
Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner	Plum-throated Cotinga
Chestnut-winged Hookbill	Bare-necked Fruitcrow
Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner	Purple-throated Fruitcrow
Striped Treehunter	Amazonian Umbrellabird
Plain-brown Woodcreeper	Andean Cock-of-the-rock
Wedge-billed Woodcreeper	White-bearded Manakin
Long-billed Woodcreeper (h)	Blue-backed Manakin
Strong-billed Woodcreeper	Wire-tailed Manakin (h)
Amazonian Barred Woodcreeper	Golden-headed Manakin
Northern Barred Woodcreeper	Golden-winged Manakin
Dwarf Tyrant-Manakin	Drab Water-Tyrant
Sooty-headed Tyrannulet	Smoky Bush-Tyrant
Slender-footed Tyrannulet	Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant
Golden-faced Tyrannulet	Paramo Ground-Tyrant
Brown-capped Tyrannulet (h)	Masked Water-Tyrant
Southern Beardless Tyrannulet	Cinnamon Attila
Mouse-colored Tyrannulet	Grayish Mourner
Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet	Dusky-capped Flycatcher
Gray Elaenia	Swainson's Flycatcher
Mottle-backed Elaenia	Short-crested Flycatcher
Sierran Elaenia	Pale-edged Flycatcher
White-throated Tyrannulet	Lesser Kiskadee
White-banded Tyrannulet	Great Kiskadee
White-tailed Tyrannulet	Boat-billed Flycatcher
Sulphur-bellied Tyrannulet	Rusty-margined Flycatcher
Torrent Tyrannulet	Social Flycatcher
Tufted Tit-Tyrant	Lemon-browed Flycatcher
Streak-necked Flycatcher	Streaked Flycatcher
Slaty-capped Flycatcher	Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher
Marble-faced Bristle-tyrant (h)	Golden-crowned Flycatcher
Yellow Tyrannulet	Piratic Flycatcher
Rufous-headed Pygmy-tyrant	

Short-tailed Pygmy-tyrant	Tropical Kingbird
Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant	Eastern Kingbird
Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher	Barred Becard
Black-headed Tody-flycatcher	Black-capped Becard
Yellow-browed Tody-flycatcher	Black-and-white Becard (h)
Common Tody-Flycatcher	One-colored Becard
Spotted Tody-flycatcher	Pink-throated Becard
Zimmer's Flatbill	Black-tailed Tityra
Gray-crowned Flatbill (h)	Black-crowned Tityra
Olive-faced Flatbill (h)	Gray-breasted Martin
Ornate Flycatcher	White-winged Swallow
Bran-colored Flycatcher	Blue-and-white Swallow
Handsome Flycatcher	Brown-belled Swallow
Cinnamon Flycatcher	White-banded Swallow
Olive-sided Flycatcher	White-thighed Swallow
Acadian Flycatcher	Southern Rough-winged Swallow
Smoke-colored Pewee	Sand Martin
Western Wood-Pewee	Barn Swallow
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Paramo Pipit
Fuscous Flycatcher	White-capped Dipper
Black Phoebe	Black-capped Donacobius
Vermilion Flycatcher	Thrush-like Wren (h)
Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant	Rufous Wren
Rufous-breasted Chat-Tyrant	Sepia-brown Wren (h)
Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant	Plain-tailed Wren (h)
Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant	Bay Wren
	House Wren
Mountain Wren	Blue-and-black Tanager
Gray-breasted Wood-Wren	Black-capped Tanager
Andean Solitaire (h)	Blue-necked Tanager
Swainson's Thrush	Masked Tanager
Pale-eyed Thrush	Opal-rumped Tanager
Great Thrush	Green-and-gold Tanager
Glossy-black Thrush	Bay-headed Tanager
Black-billed Thrush	Lacrimose Mountain-tanager
Ecuadorian Thrush	Blue-winged Mountain-tanager
Tropical Gnatcatcher	Hooded Mountain-tanager
Inca Jay	Buff-breasted Mountain-tanager (h)
Violaceous Jay	Grass-green Tanager
Brown-capped Vireo	Swallow Tanager
Red-eyed Vireo	Blue-gray Tanager
Lesser Greenlet	Palm Tanager
Black-billed Peppershrike	Silver-beaked Tanager
Tropical Parula	Masked Crimson Tanager

Cerulean Warbler	Lemon-rumped Tanager
Blackburnian Warbler	Vermilion Tanager
Blackpoll Warbler	Summer Tanager
Black-and-white Warbler	Ochre-breasted Tanager
American Redstart	Gray-headed Tanager
Olive-crowned Yellowthroat	White-lined Tanager
Canada Warbler	Flame-crested Tanager
Slate-throated Whitestart	White-shouldered Tanager
Spectacled Whitestart	Scarlet-browed Tanager
Choco Warbler (h)	Common Bush-tanager
Black-crested Warbler	Dusky Bush-tanager
Russet-crowned Warbler	Yellow-throated Bush-tanager
Three-striped Warbler	Gray-hooded Bush-tanager
Buff-rumped Warbler	Black-backed Bush-tanager
Bananaquit	Black-capped Hemisphingus
Cinereous Conebill	Superciliated Hemisphingus
Blue-backed Conebill	Black-eared Hemisphingus
Capped Conebill	Western Hemisphingus
Guira Tanager	Magpie Tanager
Fawn-breasted Tanager	Plushcap
Yellow-collared Chlorophonia	Buff-throated Saltator
Golden-rumped Euphonia	Black-winged Saltator
Thick-billed Euphonia	Grayish Saltator
White-lored Euphonia	Red-capped Cardinal
Orange-bellied Euphonia	Southern Yellow-grosbeak
Rufous-throated Tanager	Blue-black Grassquit
Golden Tanager	Dull-colored Grassquit
Silver-throated Tanager	Lesser Seed-finch
Saffron-crowned Tanager	Variable Seedeater
Flame-faced Tanager	Yellow-bellied Seedeater
Beryl-spangled Tanager	Chestnut-bellied Seedeater
Plain-colored Seedeater	Other Noteworthy Sightings
Band-tailed Seedeater	White-tailed Deer
Plumbeous Sierra-finch	Brazilian Rabbit
Slaty Finch	Black-mantled Tamarin
Pale-naped Brush-finch	White-fronted Capuchin
Rufous-naped Brush-finch	Amazonian River Turtle
Tricolored Brush-finch	Fishing Bat
Slaty Brush-finch	Fruit Bat
Chestnut-capped Brush-finch	Halloween Butterfly
Stripe-headed Brush-finch	Dusky Titi Monkey
Orange-billed Sparrow	Giant Amazonian Centipede
Black-striped Sparrow	Red Howler
Yellow-browed Sparrow	Long-nosed Bat

Rufous-collared Sparrow	Blue Morpho Butterfly
Yellow-rumped Cacique	Boa Constrictor
Northern Mountain-cacique	Squirrel Monkey
Subtropical Cacique	Night Monkey
Scarlet-rumped Cacique	Pygmy Marmoset
Crested Oropendola	Red-tailed Squirrel
Russet-backed Oropendola	Caimen
Olive Oropendola	Caimen Lizard
Shiny Cowbird	Whip-tailed Lizard
Giant Cowbird	Pale-green Delicate-footed Treefrog
Scrub Blackbird	Gecko
Oriole Blackbird	Leaf Litter Frog
Hooded Siskin	Green Anole
Olivaceous Siskin	Skunk
Yellow-bellied Siskin	White-lipped Peccary