



Ecuador: The Andes Introtour

August 1 – 8, 2009



BOOTED RACKET-TAIL Tandayapa Lodge
(voted as the **TOP BIRD OF THE TRIP**)

Leader: Sam Woods

Itinerary

- August 1** Arrival, night Quito.
- August 2** Yanacocha & the Old Nono-Mindo Road, night Tandayapa Lodge.
- August 3** Upper Tandayapa Valley & Tandayapa Lodge, night Tandayapa Lodge.
- August 4** Milpe, night Tandayapa Lodge.
- August 5** Rio Silanché, night Tandayapa Lodge.
- August 6** Paz de las Aves & the Old Nono-Mindo Road, night Tandayapa Lodge.
- August 7** Tandayapa Valley & Calacali, night Quito.
- August 8** Departure.

This may be a short tour, but it packs a lot in to a small space of time. In doing so, the whole group got a great feel of some of the spectacular birding on offer in northwest Ecuador. This tour is perfect for first-timers to the region, as you get a good spread of the many families in this part of the world, and also have good shot at some of the Chóco specialties that this region is famed for. All the participants were new to Ecuador and therefore received a "barrage" of new birds. Favorites among these were two standout groups, the colorful Andean tanagers, and stunning myriad of hummingbirds that grace these bird-rich mountains. Harvey and Doug kept a close eye on these groups and kept us up to date with our tally, as we racked off one after another species from these crowd-pleasing groups. In the end we saw an amazing 41 species of hummingbirds in just six days birding, as well as 42 species of tanagers. This was achieved as the tour allowed us to check out a variety of elevations (and therefore a number of diverse habitats, with markedly different avifauna), from the heady heights of Yanacocha on day one, at 3400m/11,155ft, to the lowlands around Rio Silanche at just 500m/1640ft.

DAILY ACCOUNTS:

Day One: YANACocha and THE OLD NONO-MINDO ROAD

The tour started at the highest point, in the temperate forests of [Yanacocha](#), a magical [Jocotoco Foundation](#) reserve just a short drive along the *Ecoruta de Paseo del Quinde* from Quito. This is a great starting point for the trip as the high elevation means that there are not too many species for a first morning, and therefore is perfect for gradual introduction to the myriad of special birds and families found within the Andes. The reserve is famed for its rich variety of hummingbirds, and as this was to be our only time in the temperate zone, this was our only shot at many of them. As we drove up through open farmland towards the reserve clear skies above revealed a spectacular Andean skyline, with the snow-topped form of Cayambe Volcanoe clearly visible off to the east. A strong blustery wind was a far from pleasant surprise as we arrived in the reserve itself, and we battled with this for a while before we made it some more sheltered areas of the trail. Pretty soon we bumped into a feeding flock that the Andes are famous for. A bewildering array of species can join up with such flocks, although up at the heady heights of Yanacocha the diversity is a little lower and less daunting for our first day. Among the attendees were **Superciliaried Hempinguses, Spectacled Redstarts, Blue-backed Conebills,** and **Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanagers.**

Once we had reached the main feeder station towards the end of the track the hummingbird action became frenetic, as dozens of hummingbirds of at least 7 different species fought for a place at the feeders. Top among those present was probably a number of "well-endowed" **Sword-billed Hummingbirds** that bought incredulous and appreciative moans from the group. Others in the mix included a brace of pufflegs, both **Sapphire-vented** in attendance with fewer **Golden-breasted Pufflegs** too. Noises like a squeaky rubber duck emanated from a number of **Buff-winged Starfrontlets** present, that fought with **Tyrian Metaltails, Shining Sunbeams,** and the odd **Mountain Velvetbreast** for a piece of the action.

After taking in this extraordinary sight we had to drag ourselves away and begin our journey down out of the temperate forests of Yanacocha into the subtropics, and the bird-rich valley of Tandayapa. Just before we left the temperate zone behind though we picked up a few choice extras, a ringtail **Cinereous Harrier** that glided over some farmland, that also held a **Paramo Pipit**, both scarce birds at these low elevations, in addition to a couple of **Red-crested Cotingas** “standing guard” on top of a small copse on the way down.

Finally, we reached the **Old Nono-Mindo Road**, an area of rich subtropical forest, laden with silvery-leaved *cecropia* trees that signified that we had dropped out of the temperate zone (where such trees do not exist). The sight of steep-sided valleys carpeted in dense cloudforest greeted us, as we made our way along this famous birding road, descending gradually as we went. Along this road we had a few “dates” lined up with some key species, the first of which, **Torrent Duck** we caught by surprise at such close quarters that it soon scampered downstream before most of us could even get out of the vehicle. Torrent Ducks love fast flowing Andean streams and often have White-capped Dippers for company, as they too are big fans of rapids in these bird-rich mountains. That was our next target, although we got a little distracted by a **Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant** first, singing its high-pitched tune from the side of the same Alambi River. Then just as we were reaching the final curtain call a pair of **White-capped Dippers** hopped onto some boulders along the stream in front of us, when they played in and out of the torrent for a while giving us all great looks at this river specialist. It was then full steam ahead to another designated spot, where on arrival we could hear the harsh guttural sounds of displaying male **Andean Cock-of-the-rocks** in the valley below. Not exactly a beautiful sound but an absolutely incredible bird. We waited and watched as up to four different bright scarlet males appeared in the trees, some of which clumsily flapped their silver-and-black wings in the hope of attracting the much dowdier female. We then made our way to [Tandayapa Lodge](#) where a barrage of new hummingbird species right on the balcony feeders brought our day total to an amazing 20 species of hummingbirds alone!



A tale of two antpittas...the first **GIANT ANTPITTA** seen well on the tour, a shock find at Bellavista, bouncing around by the toilet block during a brief stop there. More Giant Antpittas were to come later, one of which was no less obliging...

Day Two: UPPER TANDAYAPA VALLEY and TANDAYAPA LODGE

The upper reaches of the **Tandayapa Valley** are cloaked in moist cloudforest, with many huge forest trees draped in a coating of thick green moss and laden down with a mass of red bromeliads on their strong limbs. This part of the valley is home to some of the most highly prized of all the Chóco species, and so a short time after dawn had risen over the valley, we set about going after some of the most special ones. We began with the rarest of them all, Tanager Finch. Being a scarce species I thought the best thing to do was to try early on, so that we gave ourselves plenty more time to try again if required later on the tour. As it turned out we did not need to try again as a pair of these unique finches responded very well and pretty soon we were all watching a pair of **Tanager Finches** perched out in the open, singing from a stand of *chusquea* bamboo. This was not to be our only top find that morning though, and not long after we also had a **Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan** sitting quietly in the 'scope too, that was rapidly followed by a sprightly **Black-crested Warbler** singing from some open roadside shrubs.

The rest of the morning we switched around between a number of areas within the valley targeting especially flock species, as the huge flocks that roam these subtropical forests hold a good many species we had not yet seen. One particularly large flock held **Barred Becard**, the first of many **Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers** to come, a **Black-capped Tyrannulet**, and several **Grass-green Tanagers**. We also managed to

find one of the most colorful of the Chóco species in the valley when we came upon a pair of **Toucan Barbets** that had been duetting a short time before.

However, it was the late morning stop at Bellavista Lodge high in the valley that will live longest in the memory. While I paid the entrance fee at their office Harvey came to me with his camera and asked calmly "what is this bird?" only then to put a fantastic shot of a **Giant Antpitta** in my face! I dropped everything immediately and asked him where it was, whereupon he took me to the public toilets where a bold Giant Antpitta was hopping about nonchalantly in full view beside them. A shock to say the least. I later found out that for no apparent reason this individual has been visiting the lodge premises like this for almost a month. Even though we had a good shot at this species at the now famous "antpitta farm", Paz de las Aves later on the trip, like all birds even Angel's antpittas can be unpredictable and a no show is always possible even there. So it was great to have it safely in the bag at this early stage.

After a this bird-jammed morning where we had really seen some of the A-list species within the Tandayapa Valley (**Tanager Finch, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Toucan Barbet and Giant Antpitta**), we retired to Tandayapa Lodge to take in the awesome spectacle of dozens of hummingbirds swarming the feeders. At least thirteen different species visited while we watched in amazement, including an impressive male **Empress Brilliant**, a number of **Booted Racket-tails** (the lodges pin up hummer), the glittering **Western Emerald**, and the bumblebee-like **Purple-throated Woodstars**. After a few hours of this we opted to head down the valley to a close spot for one of the most spectacular nightbirds in the valley, the incredible **Lyre-tailed Nightjar**. Waited for a while and eventually had several great looks at the male's distinctive profile as he sallied out of the trees with his huge forked tail flailing impressively behind him. A great end to a red-letter day in Tandayapa.



GREEN THORNTAIL Milpe

Day Three: MILPE BIRD SANCTUARY

In spite of the frankly incredible day we had enjoyed the day before this was voted as one of the most popular places on the tour. Markedly different from the previous birding on the tour, we dropped down into the foothills close to the town of San Miguel de Los Bancos. The activity was non-stop all day, with absolutely no time to get bored, and we racked up over a hundred species in the day, many of which were new to us as this was our one and only day in the foothills.

The birding begun right after we got out of the car, with a **Buff-rumped Warbler** hopping around the flowerbeds, a **Blue-necked and Swallow Tanagers** perched up near the parking lot, and a **Snowy-throated Kingbird** (an austral migrant to the area, only present in the austral winter), on the lookout from a telegraph wire. It was then time to hit the trails in the [Mindo Cloudforest Foundation](#) Milpe Bird Sanctuary, a tiny haven for some rare Chóco species. Right off the bat we headed down into the forest after one of these, the fascinating **Club-winged Manakin**. This restricted range species is not interesting for that reason though. It like many manakins undergo extravagant displays and create quite a show when doing this. This particular manakin produces electrical-sounding beeping noises, from the rapid mechanical movement of the wings. This distinct sound could be heard emanating from the forest a short distance away as we descended down the trail, and not long after we were witnessing these birds for ourselves. Pretty soon though even this top-notch bird could not hold us back from being drawn to other birds close by as a flock came steaming through, and had us

chasing right after it. **Ochre-breasted Tanagers**, **Rufous-throated Tanagers**, **Purple Honeycreepers**, and **Chóco Warblers** were all quickly added to the list, although a couple of calling trogons managed to remain out of sight. The flocks in the area came and went and it was difficult to know if we were following the same flock or had latched onto another, as the one that came through late morning held a real gem, the emerald-colored **Glistening-green Tanager**, that shared the same flock with a **Brown-billed Scythebill** that sadly did not linger too long. After a morning straining our necks skyward in order to follow the frantic action in the trees above, we took a little breather by the hummingbird feeders, and quickly added another four species to our burgeoning hummer list: **Green-crowned Brilliant**, the dinky **Green Thorntail**, **Green-crowned Woodnymph**, and another Chóco specialty, **White-whiskered Hermit**.

After lunch (and with all the regular hummer targets seen well time and again at the feeders) we were free to move on, and being gluttons for punishment went to another forest trail for more neck-straining flock action. It may pay a physical toll but we added many new birds as by standing in a small area the flocks in these foothill reserves can sometimes sweep round time and again, allowing us to pick up different species with each new circuit. However, it was not was hiding in the flock on this wide trail in a small private Milpe reserve that got us excited (well me particularly to be accurate!). Just five minutes walk down the trail, in the midst of adding an **Ornate Flycatcher** and trying to retrace a **Broad-billed Motmot**, I glanced up and saw a large black shape clasped to the side of a thick rainforest vine. Not daring to believe my eyes I lifted my bins and sure enough, filling my field of view was a very obvious **Long-wattled Umbrellabird** swinging nonchalantly on the vine for all to see. My voice went up an octave, but soon enough we were all watching the same dark shape, a very rare Chóco cotinga, that is extremely tough to find except for at a few distant lek sites. We were truly privileged to get this one. This would have been my personal vote for top bird of the trip, but what can you do when you have to contend with displaying vivid scarlet cotingas (Andean Cock-of-the-rock), flashy hummingbirds (Booted Racket-tail), and rare and skulking polka-dotted tapaculos (Ocellated Tapaculo)? A little further along the trail we finally caught up with the flock seeing **Russet Antshrikes**, a **Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo** and an assortment of ovenbirds, including **Scaly-throated and Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaners**.

We rounded out the day with some relaxing open country birding along the Milpe Road, cruising the road for signs of activity and hopping out when we ran into some action. This paid off well with most people saying this was their favorite part of the trip. A stop here produced a small party of flashy **Yellow-tufted (Black-faced) Dacnises** feeding in a low roadside tree, a stop there produced a **Scarlet-backed Woodpecker** creeping up a trunk, and some movements in the grass produced a small flock of "finches" that included **Thick-billed Seed-finch** and **Black-and-white Seedeater**. A **Pacific (Pale-legged) Hornero** strutted in mach fashion down the road in front of us at pone point while a small group of **Masked Water-Tyrants** fed in the paddocks alongside.

The final curtain call of the afternoon was the best of all though. A raptor perched up by the road took flight as we stopped to train our bins on it, although not before I had managed to see the salient features of **Semicollared Hawk**, a very scarce raptor in the

region. It may not have lingered for long, although the stop proved very fortuitous indeed, as some yelping toucan calls led me to make a brief scan of the treetops that revealed a large band of toucans packed into a particular treetop. On closer inspection this gathering of at least nine birds included at least four **Chóco Toucans**, three **Chestnut-mandibled Toucans**, and two or more **Pale-mandibled (Collared) Aracaris**. Nine birds, three species. A magical finish to our time in the foothills.



BARRED PUFFBIRD Rio Silanché

Day Four: RIO SILANCHÉ

It may have been day four, and we may have already seen a bunch of stuff, but the pace did not slow much as we ventured lower down still to some remnant forest patches in the lowlands, near the town of Pedro Vicente Maldonado. Although there was a significant amount of overlap from the day before in the foothills, we had also dropped another 600m lower in altitude, which in this part of the World brings some big changes in the bird communities. In short, we added a bunch more stuff, and enjoyed a second day running of more than 100 species recorded. The first part of the morning was spent

birding the road to the [Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary](#), where the habitat is mainly open country areas with some remnant trees dotted around, a sad reflection of this area, that was formerly covered with thick lowland rainforest, although has largely now been cleared for palm plantations and cow pasture. However, do not let this put you off there is still some fantastic birding to be had, even within some of these cleared areas, as many birds persist in these remnant forest patches.

Our first stop produced a few **Gray-and-gold Tanagers**, a pair of **Pacific Antwrens**, and a small party of **Masked Tityras**. The next few stop, just a little way up the road, brought us a Chóco specialty in the form of a **Dusky Pigeon** that responded well by sailing into a tree beside us. We then made our way to a small line of remaining trees close to a larger forest patch visible downhill off the road. I popped the tape of **Barred Puffbird** as a pair had been in this area recently and immediately got an answer from the tree we were standing underneath, and we soon found a pair of these well-marked puffbirds sitting in the upper branches. A **Bright-rumped Attila** seemingly calling in the distance in the same area, also proved to be closer at hand than expected and was soon teed up in the 'scope right beside the road. The final part of this flurry of new and interesting species involved a flashy pair of woodpeckers that our driver pointed us towards, that proved to be a fine pair of **Guayaquil Woodpeckers**, a species of humid lowland and foothill forests in the west, here at the northern reaches of its range. A pair of these striking birds came in and gave us top views, the male's bright scarlet head glowing brightly from the open tree they chose to feed in.

We continued with our journey towards the reserve although predictably kept stopping for avian attractions along the way, first a calling **Striped Cuckoo** had us alighting from the vehicle, and a little playback brought the bird into the tree beside us, flaring its crest up in anger between bouts of further song. A little way on and we stopped on the edge of a palm plantation where **Gray-capped Flycatchers**, **Yellow-bellied Elaenia**, tiny **Pacific Parrotlets**, a small foraging party of **Golden-hooded Tanagers**, and an especially aggressive **Brown-capped Tyrannulet** that steamed angrily into the tree above us, was a good haul for a small line of remnant forest trees. We again tried to make our way to the reserve only to be sidetracked again by a small group of perched parakeets, **Maroon-tailed Parakeets** feeding unobtrusively by the road, and this in turn led us to a calling **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, a pair of **Cinnamon Woodpeckers** perched high on a palm "spike" in the distance, and a **Slaty Spinetail** working a young balsa plantation by the road.



STRIPED CUCKOO Rio Silanché

Late in the morning we finally crossed over the small metal bridge over the Silanche River that marked our entry into the reserve, and once again we were forced out of the bus when frantic flock activity in the trees above distracted us from our onward journey. Unfortunately, the “big flock” was moving at some pace so that we only really caught the back end of this fast-moving party, that held a number of Tawny-crested Tanagers, and a male Orange-fronted Barbet before the flock disappeared from view, and the trees fell silent once more. Now it was time to try for one of Silanche’s more skulking residents, another Chóco specialty, a few pairs of which still hang on in the area. I went straight to where I had recently enjoyed some luck with a pair of **Stub-tailed Antbirds**, and played their call tentatively. Within seconds I heard a quick response that deceptively sounded a way back from our position on the roadside. Knowing how this bird can be though I continued with the tape and within just a few minutes a male popped up just a few meters away from us on an open vine. Everyone was alerted, and pretty soon we were all standing on the bank looking down at this coal black bird with its large white mantle patch flared up on its back. For the second tour running this bird surprised me with the ease at which it revealed itself to us. With the antbird “in the bag” we opted for an earlyish lunch on Silanche’s observation tower that brought very little during the heat of the day, with the exception of a male **Orange-crowned Euphonia** that alighted in the tree beside us. However, the purple blooms at the base of the tower were alive with hummingbirds fighting over this rich source of nectar. Most aggressive and visible among these were some sharp-dressed **Purple-chested Hummingbirds**

that kept each other, and the **Stripe-throated and White-whiskered Hermits** at bay when they attempted to rob them of “their” nectar.

After a rest we hit the wide-open forest trails within this small (but vital) sanctuary, and lucked into a large flock of birds streaming through the trees above us. Pretty soon a **Scarlet-browed Tanager** or two had been picked out of the mix, as well as **Gray Elaenia**, and **Sooty-headed Tyrannulet**. Along the trails itself a pair of Western **White-tailed Trogons**, a **White-whiskered Puffbird**, **Lineated Woodpecker**, and **Ochre-bellied Flycatcher**, **Scarlet-rumped Cacique** and a trio of new woodcreepers: **Streak-headed, Black-striped and Northern Barred Woodcreepers** all joined the list. A final bit of flock activity by the parking lot as we tried to drag ourselves away and head back to Tandayapa brought our final addition of the day, a **Yellow-margined Flatbill** that called from within and betrayed its presence to us in the process.



STUB-TAILED ANT BIRD Rio Silanché

Day Five: PAZ DE LAS AVES and THE OLD NONO-MINDO ROAD

Today we returned to “familiar ground”, the subtropical forests near Tandayapa. However, although we had visited similar habitat on days one and two, on this occasion we visited a small private reserve that we had not gone to before that has some very special avian attractions of its own. This property correctly referred to as **Paz de las Aves**, although often referred to as the “antpitta farm” gained birding fame four years ago when two brothers (Angel and Rodrigo) began habituating a number of birds in their forest, most remarkably some shy antpittas themselves. The place has since then therefore become a true must-visit site as it gives birders good opportunities at seeing

some really rare and normally difficult species. As a guide this is also a great site as it makes my life a whole lot easier in terms of finding some of these traditionally difficult species. We got there a short time after daybreak and found Angel and his brother Rodrigo waiting for us. Soon after they led us to the trailhead and we swiftly descended down into their forested valley below, the realm of many of their best species.



A tale of two antpittas II: GIANT ANTPITTA Paz de las Aves
(the now famous "Maria")

Our first port of call was a specially constructed blind deep within the valley where Angel carefully sliced open bananas and positioned grapes for an attendant horde of **Sickle-winged Guans** that were greedily awaiting our arrival. As soon as the fruit was "released" the guans went into a frenzy grappling with each other to get at the harvest. The guans were a given here, although we continued to watch for a chance at some

other more scarce fruit eaters that might also come in once the guans had moved off and gave them a chance! Little seemed to stir aside from the guans and so pretty soon after Angel drew our attentions away as a certain large rusty-breasted form came bouncing down the trail towards us out the back of the blind: "Maria", the most trusted and reliable of the **Giant Antpittas** on site was here and looking for a handout! Amazingly of course we had already come upon this species a few days before in the Upper Tandayapa Valley. Although, the sight of this large antpitta bouncing down the trail so close to us was a top attraction all the same. At one point we were all sat in the hide sandwiched between guans flapping clumsily around the bananas on one side, while just out the back the Giant Antpitta hopped down the steps towards the blind behind. A remarkable scene. While we posed for photos with Maria a large and colorful visitor to the fruit out the front of the blind caught our attention as a **Toucan Barbet** lent a splash of color to proceedings and visited once many of the guans had calmed down or dispersed. Just when we thought we had enough to focus on Angel found a gorgeous pair of emerald-green and scarlet **Golden-headed Quetzals**, so we edged past the Giant Antpitta on the path and got into position so we could all eyeball this glistening rainforest quetzal. Once again though Angel and his brother were not done just yet and while we admired the quetzal he checked the blind again and found another scarce fruit lover in attendance, and he soon brought us back to the hide to admire an **Olivaceous Piha** as it came in to feed on the bananas. From one cotinga to another, while watching this quiet and inconspicuous cotinga we heard a loud and much more conspicuous cotinga calling from in front of the blind below, where a specially constructed shelter brought us further (and much closer) views of noisy displaying male **Andean Cock-of-the-rocks**. Soon after these vivid red males fled into the bottom of the valley, presumably chasing after an unseen female, and the forest fell in to silence once more.

This was our cue to hit the trail again and journey down into the bottom of the valley for another "stage" for the next segment of the amazing "Paz Show"! We all made our way over a rushing Andean stream to another designated feeding area, this time for the notoriously shy **Yellow-breasted Antpitta**. On arrival there was however, neither sight nor sound of this usually vocal antpitta and so I fretted for a while, as Angel, myself and Rodrigo searched the surrounding hillsides. Thankfully, Rodrigo heard the antpitta a little way down river and so then proceeded to whistle in the bird and lure it towards its "normal" feeding area. Amazingly, the bird did indeed follow Rodrigo like he was the pied piper, and soon enough emerged on the open slope in front of us to gorge on specially laid out worms, giving us all incredible looks as it did so.

We then headed back up the trail and relaxed by the busy hummingbird feeders that were buzzing with birds and alive with activity, and brought us three new species to add to our burgeoning hummer list, all of which were Ch□co specialties: the glistening **Velvet-purple Coronet**, the dowdy earth-colored **Brown Inca**, and the striking **Violet-tailed Sylph**, in addition to our best views yet of several male **Purple-bibbed Whitetips**. The feeders were truly dizzying to watch as twelve species of hummingbirds fought over the rich sugar water within, quite a show, and couple with Tandayapa's crazy feeders a big help in amassing over 40 hummer species for the trip. After an hour or so gorging on the hummingbirds it was time to gorge on something else, and we headed up to Angel's small makeshift café, where we enjoyed the usual filling brunch of

bolones and cheese empanadas, washed down with tea and coffee, while we took in a few birds around the café like a small group of **White-winged Brush-finches** trying to sneak through the underbrush.



OLIVACEOUS PIHA Paz de las Aves

Even after this bird-packed morning though our time at Paz de las Aves was far from over as we were still after one of its star residents in an area we had not yet had time to search. So once we had downed the bolones, and despite having a little difficulty with movement following this heavy, stomach-filling “snack” we made our way up to a fruit orchard on the forest edge which allowed us a great panoramic view of the trees at the forest edge, a known haunt of the rare Orange-breasted Fruiteater, another bird that is restricted to this endemic-rich Chóco region. Before we got on to that particular beauty we took in some flock birds feeding in a fruiting tree that included a bunch of **Beryl-spangled Tanagers**, that also held the odd **Metallic-green Tanager** in their midst. Also in the area was a pair of large woodcreepers and another one for our list, the

powerfully built **Strong-billed Woodcreeper**. Less obliging than these though was a lone Rufous-winged Tyrannulet that slipped through the net for most, as it appeared for just a short time within the passing bird "wave" that was attracted to this rich fruiting area. However, the star of the show was of course the dazzling male Orange-breasted Fruiteater decked out in vibrant emerald-green, with a jet-black hood and fiery orange chest. Rodrigo got hot under the collar when he first picked it up quietly feeding on some small fruits, only for the bird to jump ship as soon as he'd clapped eyes on it. Luckily for us it then moved into an open tree where we managed to get this flashy cotinga lined up in the 'scope for all. Mission accomplished. With a brace of antpittas, a trio of colorful cotingas, and a hatful of other stuff including toucan barbets, tanagers, hummingbirds and others we finally left the antpitta farm behind and drove back towards Tandayapa Lodge, taking the famous birding route of the Old Nono-Mindo Road as we did so, where we made more than the odd stop en-route to pick up a number of key birds on our journey back to the lodge.



YELLOW-BREASTED ANTPITTA Paz de las Aves

Our first stop was specifically to look for another tanager from the Chóco region, the **Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager** that failed to show, although **Flavescent Flycatcher** was a new one for us in this area all the same. The tanager though did not take much longer to turn up though as a lone bird was found perched right in the open just before a heavy downpour a little further up the valley. For all my efforts though my driver stole the limelight later in the afternoon (and I thank him for that no end!) when I stopped to target **Ocellated Tapaculo** at a spot I have had a bit of luck with it in the past. Incredibly, the bird called back almost instantaneously and surveying the area rapidly for a likely viewing spot I quickly became a little deflated as thick cover in the

area did not offer us much hope, which I relayed to the group and explained that as it was calling at such close range we should give it a shot all the same. I had barely popped the tape for a few seconds when our driver Jorge calmly informed he that he had the bird in his sights, I then raced over there found his spot and quickly indicated with my laser pointer where the bird was one by one to all (as the bird was only visible through a tiny window, allowing only one person at a time to see it), until everyone had seen it well as is sat in small window with its white polka dots glowing out from the dark understorey. A short time later the bird dropped out of the window and disappeared back into the forest shadows once more, leaving us all feeling mightily privileged indeed, in full appreciation of one of the tours best moments, in getting such a great look at one of Tandayapa's most notorious skulkers. Feeling a little over confident perhaps following our rich vein of form we tried at dusk for an owl lower down the Tandayapa Valley although could not entice a calling Colombian (Rufescent) Screech-owl in close enough for a sight of it on this occasion. All in all though we had enjoyed a truly remarkable days birding in the Chóco region.

Day Six: TANDAYAPA VALLEY and CALACALI

Our final day was spent checking a number of spots in the Tandayapa Valley, and also checking a few new sites for us en-route back to Quito. Things started brightly with a visit to the **Tandayapa Lodge** blind just a short time after daybreak. A nightlight in the forest there attracts insects, which then in turn bring in birds to feast on any hanging about the lights in the morning. The main visitor to this light is often a resident pair of **Immaculate Antbirds**, and on this day again they did not disappoint, as first the jet black male and later the rusty female hopped around in front of the blind picking off any insects in the vicinity. Also present was a very welcome **White-throated Quail-Dove** that paraded past the blind a few times. Bouncing around on the floor with a gleaming white throat that stood out from the gloom of the forest floor was a **Chestnut-capped Brush-finch**. Lastly, a rustle in the understorey led us to a **Streak-capped Treehunter** on the prowl for insect prey there too. Unfortunately, the trails then went quiet, with little further to show for our efforts with the exception of a lekking male **Wedge-billed Hummingbird** that did not linger for all. It was similarly quiet in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, where Chestnut-collared Swifts darted overhead with the larger White-collared Swifts, and a male Green-and-black Fruiteater put in an appearance. Although, the mornings star performer was a pristine **Plushcap (Plush-capped Finch)**, one of those taxonomic anomalies that no one quite knows where to put. Long thought to be within the finch family, it has currently been re-assigned to the tanagers. At least for now anyway!

Finally, we had to bid farewell to the Tandayapa Valley, that had been a great base for exploring some bird-rich neighboring areas, and had bought us more than few birds itself, and begin our journey back to Quito. We made a short deliberate stop at a small orchid reserve along the main highway en-route so that we could lunch by a special set of hummer feeders. However, before we made it to the feeders and set up shop for yet another stunning hummingbird, we found ourselves distracted by the harsh cries of a pair of **Beautiful Jays**, our second encounter with this well-named deep-blue Chóco jay. This time though one of the pair gave us superlative views as is sat in a canopy at eye-level within a few meters of us, a much better showing all round. The we feasted on our final packed lunch of the trip, while over looking a couple of feeders on the forest

edge, where all was quiet for a long time. Then a Green Violet-ear made an attempt at feeding at one of them and within seconds an angry **White-tailed Hillstar** darted out from the forest and chased the unlucky violet-ear away. This happened a couple of times before finally one of a couple of hillstars in the area gave us a longer look as it fed on some red blooms on the edge of the cloudforest. This rare Hillstar tipped us over the forty mark for hummingbird species on the trip.

Our final stop of the trip was further east as we headed back across the equator towards Quito, in an area of dry, semi-desert habitat within the dry inter-Andean valley that the capital lies within, near the “equator town” of Calacali. Frankly, the birding there was pretty slow although we did manage to add a number of dry country birds that we had not been in range for up until this late stage. Among them were two more hummers: the distinctive **Black-tailed Trainbearer**, and an all too elusive **Giant Hummingbird** that just flew past us once. Aside from that, **Band-tailed Seedeater**, **Golden-rumped Euphonia**, and **Tufted Tit-Tyrant** were all added, and we enjoyed some great perched looks at a **Variable Hawk**, and watched on as an **American Kestrel** chased off a juvenile **Harris’s Hawk**. Sadly though, the hoped-for **White-tailed Shrike-Tyrant** put in just the briefest of appearances before going to ground again, just before we had to leave for Quito.

This left us with a trip total of 328 bird species from six days birding, (293 of which were seen by at least one member of the group), and a headache when it came to trying to decide the best birds of the trip! A first round of voting left us with a mind-boggling list of seventeen contenders for the title of top trip bird. Eventually this was painstakingly whittled down to just three birds: In third place, the vivid vermilion red **Andean Cock-of-the-rock** that we saw in the throws of display both along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, and again up-close-and-personal at Paz de las Aves; in second place the enigmatic, polka-dotted **Ocellated Tapaculo** that our driver Jorge so skillfully picked out in the dark undergrowth along the Old Nono-Mindo Road; and finally the first place and **top trip bird** was the incredibly cute **Booted Racket-tails** that swarmed the feeders at Tandayapa Lodge, another hummer that appears more like a cartoon character than a living creature of the natural world. The other contenders are worth mentioning too though, as there were some star species among them: **Cinereous Harrier**, **Sparkling Violet-ear**, **Velvet-purple Coronet**, **Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan**, **Lyre-tailed Nightjar**, **Masked Trogon**, **Beautiful Jay**, **Immaculate Antbird**, **Yellow-breasted Antpitta**, **Club-winged Manakin**, **Orange-breasted Fruiteater**, **Long-wattled Umbrellabird**, **Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager**, and **Flame-rumped Tanager**. It is hard to believe that such mega species as **Giant Antpitta**, **Sword-billed Hummingbird**, **Toucan Barbet**, **Golden-headed Quetzal**, **Guayaquil Woodpecker**, **Stub-tailed Antbird**, and **Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager** did not even make this list! Such is the abundance of striking, rare, and colorful species in this region.

SPECIES LIST

The taxonomy of the list follows: Clements, James F., White, Anthony W., and Fitzpatrick, John W. *The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World*. Cornell, 2007. This list is up to date with the major changes published by Cornell in December 2008.

TINAMOUS

TINAMIDAE

H Little Tinamou	<i>Crypturellus soui</i>
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As usual merely heard around the Rio Silanche where like many tinamous, they are extremely tricky to actually see!

DUCKS, GEESE, AND SWANS

ANATIDAE

Torrent Duck	<i>Merganetta armata</i>
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A skittish male put in a brief appearance along the Rio Alambi as we made our way to Tandayapa Lodge on our first afternoon.

GUANS, CHACHALACAS, CURASSOWS

CRACIDAE

Wattled Guan	<i>Aburria aburri</i>
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The shock find of the first day was one of these hyper-elusive guans turning up right above the veranda at Tandayapa Lodge.

Sickle-winged Guan	<i>Chamaepetes goudotii</i>
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The usual rowdy mob of guans was waiting for us when we arrived at Angel's fruit feeders at Paz de las Aves, hanging around to ensure they got first pick of any of the fruit feast that Angel laid out for them!

NEW WORLD QUAIL

ODONTOPHORIDAE

H Rufous-fronted Wood-Quail	<i>Odontophorus erythrops</i>
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Heard distantly in the Rio Silanche area.

H Dark-backed Wood-Quail	<i>Odontophorus melanonotus</i>
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As with the tinamous a tough group to see, a few were heard downhill from the trail at Paz de las Aves, with another covey heard around San Tadeo.

HERONS, EGRETS, AND BITTERNS

ARDEIDAE

Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
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A few were seen flying over around Milpe.

Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
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Several sightings were made around Milpe.

NEW WORLD VULTURES

CATHARTIDAE

Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>
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Regularly encountered in the lowlands and foothills.

Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
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Regularly encountered in the lowlands and foothills.

HAWKS EAGLES AND KITES

ACCIPITRIDAE

Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>
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*Two birds sailed over Paz de las Aves, as we made our way to the **Orange-breasted Fruiteater spot.***

Cinereous Harrier	<i>Circus cinereus</i>
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An unexpected find as we were leaving Yanacocha, presumably a wandering bird from higher elevations. The bird was a ringtail that swooped lower over an area of open agricultural fields.

Semicollared Hawk	<i>Accipiter collaris</i>
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A red-letter find in the Milpe area was one of these very rare raptors.

Barred Hawk	<i>Leucopternis princeps</i>
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A calling bird cruised overhead several times in the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Harris's Hawk	<i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i>
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A young bird in the dry country of Calacali, which was being mobbed by one of the resident American Kestrels, was a good find.

GO Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle	<i>Geranoaetus melanoleucus</i>
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One flew over while we were birding the dry scrub of Calacali.

Roadside Hawk	<i>Buteo magnirostris</i>
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A few birds were seen in the Tandayapa Valley.

Variable Hawk	<i>Buteo polyosoma</i>
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After a high flying dot at Yanacocha on the first day, much better views were had in Calacali, where we had great close up looks at a rufous-backed morph perched up in an Agave.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS

FALCONIDAE

Laughing Falcon	<i>Herpetotheres cachinnans</i>
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A perched bird on the lookout for snakes was seen close to the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

H Barred Forest-Falcon	<i>Micrastur ruficollis</i>
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A distant calling bird was heard at Tandayapa Lodge, while a Collared Forest-Falcon also called off in the distance at the same time.

H Collared Forest-Falcon	<i>Micrastur semitorquatus</i>
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One was heard calling while we walked the trails at Tandayapa, at the same time as a Barred Forest-Falcon was also calling off in the distance in the other direction.

American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
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Three or four birds were seen at Calacali.

Bat Falcon	<i>Falco ruficularis</i>
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A pair were seen standing sentry in the lowlands near Rio Silanche.

RAILS, GALLINULES, AND COOTS

RALLIDAE

H White-throated Crake	<i>Laterallus albigularis</i>
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A single bird was heard calling from a dense oil palm plantation in the Silanche area.

PIGEONS AND DOVES

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
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Band-tailed Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas fasciata</i>
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A few scattered sightings were made in the upper subtropics.

Plumbeous Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas plumbea</i>
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One was seen perched from the lower deck observation platform at Tandayapa Lodge. Another was also seen at Paz de las Aves.

Ruddy Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas subvinacea</i>
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A few were seen around Milpe and in the Rio Silanche area.

Dusky Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas goodsoni</i>
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One bird was taped in well in the Silanche area, where it was teed up in the 'scope.

Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>
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Commonly encountered as we drove into Quito at the end of the tour, and also recorded around Yanacocha and Calacali. One of Ecuador's most common highland birds.

GO Common Ground-Dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i>
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A few were seen darting by in the dry country of Calacali.

White-tipped Dove	<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>
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A few were seen in the Tandayapa Valley.

GO Pallid Dove	<i>Leptotila pallida</i>
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A number of these doves were heard both in Milpe and Silanche, but a brief flyby for the leader only was unfortunately all we could muster on this occasion.

White-throated Quail-Dove	<i>Geotrygon frenata</i>
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One was seen strutting out in front of the blind at Tandayapa Bird Lodge.

PARROTS

PSITTACIDAE

Maroon-tailed Parakeet	<i>Pyrrhura melanura pacifica</i>
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Several small groups were found in Silanche.

Pacific Parrotlet	<i>Forpus coelestis</i>
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This dinky parrot was seen a couple of times in the Rio Silanche area.

Red-billed Parrot	<i>Pionus sordidus</i>
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A couple of small groups flew by in the Tandayapa Valley.

Bronze-winged Parrot	<i>Pionus chalcopterus</i>
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Some great perched views were obtained of this unique parrot in Milpe, with later flybys also seen in Silanche.

Red-ored Parrot (Amazon)	<i>Amazona autumnalis</i>
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Pretty scarce and local in this part of the world, a couple came low overhead near Rio Silanche, when their red foreheads could be seen clearly.

Scaly-naped Parrot (Amazon)	<i>Amazona mercenaria</i>
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A couple floated overhead at Paz de las Aves.

CUCKOOS

CUCULIDAE

Squirrel Cuckoo	<i>Piaya cayana</i>
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Recorded around Paz de las Aves and also in the foothills at Milpe.

Striped Cuckoo	<i>Tapera naevia</i>
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Great looks at this open country cuckoo were had in the Rio Silanche area, where we got to see it flaring up its crest in anger, once we had taped it out of its palm "hideout".

Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i>
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Several groups of this gregarious "cuckoo" were seen along the Milpe road.

OWLS

STRIGIDAE

H Colombian (Rufescent) Screech-Owl	<i>Megascops (ingens) colombianus</i>
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Close but no cigar. We heard it calling softly a few times at a known stakeout but just could not get it to come down slope close enough.

NIGHTJARS**CAPRIMULGIDAE**

Lyre-tailed Nightjar	<i>Uropsalis lyra</i>
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One of the most spectacular nightbirds in Ecuador, the male of which has a massive forked tail that trails behind it in flight as it sallies out for insects and when displaying. We got a couple of looks at his spectacular appendage as it flew out of the rainforest canopy and floated out into the night sky. A fantastic bird.

SWIFTS**APODIDAE**

Chestnut-collared Swift	<i>Streptoprocne rutila</i>
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*A few of these small swifts were seen flying around with the much larger **White-collared Swifts** on a sunny day in the Upper Tadayapa Valley.*

White-collared Swift	<i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i>
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This versatile swifts was seen in the highlands in the Upper Tadayapa Valley, and also much lower down around Rio Silanche.

Gray-rumped Swift	<i>Chaetura cinereiventris</i>
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A few were seen in the lowlands at Rio Silanche.

HUMMINGBIRDS**TROCHILIDAE**

White-whiskered Hermit	<i>Phaethornis yaruqui</i>
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This striking Chóco specialty was regularly visiting the feeders at the Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and was also coming to the great set of hummer flowers in the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Tawny-bellied Hermit	<i>Phaethornis syrmatophorus</i>
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This highland hermit was seen along the Old Nono-Mindo Road near San Tadeo, and also in the Tadayapa Valley.

Stripe-throated Hermit	<i>Phaethornis striigularis</i>
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*One of these impish, miniature hermits kept trying to visit an area of purple flowers at Rio Silanche, although always incurred the wrath of the local **Purple-chested Hummingbirds** that quickly chased it away everytime.*

White-necked Jacobin	<i>Florisuga mellivora</i>
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A rarity in the highlands, one was visiting the Tadayapa Lodge feeders on one day.

Brown Violetear	<i>Colibri delphinae</i>
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One or two were regularly coming to the packed feeders at Tadayapa Lodge.

Green Violetear	<i>Colibri thalassinus</i>
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*This seasonal visitor was regular in small numbers at the Tadayapa Lodge feeders, although in lesser numbers than its larger cousin, the **Sparkling Violet-ear**. Another also tried to come to the feeders at El Pahuma, where the resident **White-tailed Hillstars** aggressively chased it away each time it tried to come in. One or two were also coming to the busy feeders at Paz de las Aves.*

Sparkling Violetear	<i>Colibri coruscans</i>
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*Good numbers of these violet-ears were coming to the Tadayapa feeders, where at this time anyway they seemed to outnumber the smaller **Green Violet-ears**.*

Green Thorntail	<i>Discosura conversii</i>
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This cute hummer was packing one of the feeders in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Western Emerald	<i>Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus</i>
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Having just done a tour and seen none of these at their regular haunt (Tandayapa Lodge), I was relieved to find that they were back "in town" for this tour, and several were coming regularly to the Tandayapa Lodge feeders while we were there.

*NB. This distinctive western "form" has recently been formally split from the eastern **Blue-tailed Emerald C. mellisugus** on the Clements list.*

Green-crowned Woodnymph	<i>Thalurania fannyi verticeps</i>
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This sharp-dressed hummer was regularly seen visiting the feeders in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Andean Emerald	<i>Amazilia franciae</i>
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Regular at Tandayapa's feeders, and also recorded at both Paz de las Aves and Milpe.

Purple-chested Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia rosenbergi</i>
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The reserve staff at the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary should be commended for planting some great flowering shrubs that are a magnet for this Chóco species. A number of these hummers were visiting a set of purple flowering plants right by the observation tower in this small sanctuary. They were particularly aggressive, chasing both each other and the other two hermits trying to get a look in (Stripe-throated and White-whiskered).

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia tzacatl</i>
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Recorded in good numbers at Tandayapa's feeders, in addition to those at Paz de las Aves and Milpe.

Speckled Hummingbird	<i>Adelomyia melanogenys</i>
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This small hermit-like hummer was seen several times in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, and also at the crowded feeders at Paz de las Aves.

Fawn-breasted Brilliant	<i>Heliodoxa rubinoides</i>
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A regular fixture at both the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, and at Paz de las Aves.

Green-crowned Brilliant	<i>Heliodoxa jacula</i>
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Good numbers were seen at Milpe's feeders in the foothills.

Empress Brilliant	<i>Heliodoxa imperatrix</i>
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This is one of the most striking of all the hummingbirds in the northwest (although perhaps a little overshadowed by the glistening Velvet-purple Coronet), we saw a smart male bird at the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, with a number of individuals also coming to the Paz de las Aves feeders too.

White-tailed Hillstar	<i>Urochroa bougueri</i>
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*A rare hummer in the northwest. We strategically lunched by a small set of feeders by a forested Andean stream that hosted two of these aggressive hillstars. A **Green Violet-ear** tried to check out the feeders on several occasions there, but was always violently rebuffed by a hillstar standing guard close by.*

Buff-tailed Coronet	<i>Boissonneaua flavescens</i>
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One of the commonest species at the Tandayapa feeders, and also recorded at Paz de las Aves.

Velvet-purple Coronet	<i>Boissonneaua jardini</i>
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No words can quite express how impressive this glistening purple and blue hummer is. A shift in the light and the bird turns instantly and dramatically from a blackish bird into a flashy metallic purple, blue and gold hummingbird that is literally awe-inspiring. I quite like this one! Two to three birds were visiting the feeders at Paz de las Aves.

Shining Sunbeam	<i>Aglaeactis cupripennis</i>
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One of the more aggressive and territorial of the high Andean hummers, we came across at least two birds that were regularly fighting and visiting the Yanacocha feeders during our first morning.

Mountain Velvetbreast	<i>Lafresnaya lafresnayi</i>
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A female was coming to Yanacocha's feeders regularly while we were there.

Brown Inca	<i>Coeligena wilsoni</i>
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At least one bird was regularly coming to the feeders at Paz de las Aves, where we recorded an amazing 13 different species of hummingbird in just an hour there.

Collared Inca	<i>Coeligena torquata</i>
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Several were seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Buff-winged Starfrontlet	<i>Coeligena lutetiae</i>
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This temperate hummingbird was only seen on our first day at Yanacocha, where it was one of the most frequently recorded hummers

Sword-billed Hummingbird	<i>Ensifera ensifera</i>
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For me one of the most incredible hummers out there. A true living cartoon. We saw a number of them at Yanacocha where they were regularly coming to the feeders there. In spite of an incredible crowd reaction to this outlandish hummer it did not even make it into the list of top contenders for bird of the trip (which ended up being comprised of seventeen species!) Such is the abundance of very cool species in northwest Ecuador!

Great Sapphirewing	<i>Pterophanes cyanopterus</i>
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One of the largest hummers on the planet. A number of birds came in to the Yanacocha feeders on our first day. These involved mostly males birds, with just the odd rufous-breasted female.

Giant Hummingbird	<i>Patagona gigas</i>
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The Worlds largest hummingbird, at a whopping 23cm. One was seen briefly by just a few of us at Calacali, where there were no significant flowering agaves close by, that therefore made them tough to find there.

Gorgeted Sunangel	<i>Heliangelus strophanus</i>
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A few were seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, and one also came to the feeders at Bellavista.

Sapphire-vented Puffleg	<i>Eriocnemis luciani</i>
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Regularly seen visiting the feeders at Yanacocha.

Golden-breasted Puffleg	<i>Eriocnemis mosquera</i>
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A few were coming to the feeders at Yanacocha.

Purple-bibbed Whitetip	<i>Urosticte benjamini</i>
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Another gorgeous Chóco endemic. At least one male came in regularly while we were at Tandayapa Lodge, and a further two birds (a male and at least one female) came to Angel's feeders at Paz de las Aves.

Booted Racket-tail	<i>Ocreatus underwoodii</i>
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Another "cartoon" hummer that you could not dream up. The male has spectacular rackets protruding from its tail, is shimmering emerald green around the throat, and all of this is capped off nicely with a pair of fluffy white "boots". They were a regular feature at the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, with a few more seen at the Paz de las Aves feeders too (that included at least one racket-less female too). Voted for as the **BIRD OF THE TRIP** in a tightly fought contest at our farewell dinner in Quito.

Black-tailed Trainbearer	<i>Lesbia victoriae</i>
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A few were seen in the dry scrub of Calacali.

Tyrian Metaltail	<i>Metallura tyrianthina</i>
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Another regular visitor to the feeders at Yanacocha.

Violet-tailed Sylph	<i>Agelaiocercus coelestis</i>
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At least two males and a female were seen during our time at the Paz de las Aves feeders.

Wedge-billed Hummingbird	<i>Augastes geoffroyi</i>
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A singing male was seen at a "lek site" along the Tandayapa Bird Lodge trails.

Purple-crowned Fairy	<i>Heliothryx barroti</i>
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A single bird was seen perched up on a forest trail in a private reserve at Milpe, and another was seen feeding in Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary the following day.

Purple-throated Woodstar	<i>Calliphlox mitchellii</i>
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This bumblebee like hummer was regularly seen coming to Tandayapa's crazy feeders.

Purple-collared Woodstar	<i>Myrtis fanny</i>
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A couple of people got lucky with one of these scarce hummers at Calacali that did not stick around for most of us.

TROGONS

TROGONIDAE

(Western) White-tailed Trogon	<i>Trogon viridis chionurus</i>
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A pair were seen along a forest trail at Rio Silanche.

H Collared Trogon	<i>Trogon collaris</i>
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Heard close in two separate areas at Milpe, although we unfortunately could not locate them.

Masked Trogon	<i>Trogon personatus</i>
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Regularly seen right around the lodge at Tandayapa, where the female especially posed for long periods for photos on several days. Another female showed up along the trail at Paz de las Aves too.

H White-eyed (Chocó) Trogon	<i>Trogon comptus</i>
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Heard on a couple of occasions in Milpe, and then again at Silanche, although on all occasions the bird was at some distance and showed no signs of coming in. Very frustrating.

Golden-headed Quetzal	<i>Pharomachrus auriceps</i>
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Everyone rightly loves a quetzal and this one was no different. Four different birds (two pairs) were seen in Paz de las Aves. In spite of the love showed at the time, even this glittering green and scarlet bird could not manage to make it into the final 17 birds voted for as top trip birds at our final farewell dinner in Quito. It says something when a quetzal cannot make the grade!

MOTMOTS

MOMOTIDAE

Rufous Motmot	<i>Baryphthengus martii</i>
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Single birds were seen in the foothills at Milpe, and the following day in the lowland forest within the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Broad-billed Motmot	<i>Electron platyrhynchum</i>
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One showed to all in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

PUFFBIRDS

BUCCONIDAE

Barred Puffbird	<i>Nystalus radiatus</i>
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A pair turned up nicely at a known spot near Rio Silanche, sticking around for some good photo opportunities too.

White-whiskered Puffbird	<i>Malacoptila panamensis</i>
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A single bird came in well along one of the forest trails at Rio Silanche.

JACAMARS**GALBULIDAE**

Rufous-tailed Jacamar

*Galbula ruficauda**A calling bird was found as we descended into the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.***NEW WORLD BARBETS****CAPITONIDAE****Orange-fronted Barbet*****Capito squamatus****One male was seen in a fast-moving feeding flock at the edge of the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.*

Red-headed Barbet

*Eubucco bourcierii**A pair visited the feeders at Tandayapa Lodge several times while we were there.***TOUCAN-BARBETS****SEMORNITHIDAE****Toucan Barbet*****Semnornis ramphastinus****This outlandish, "clown of the Andes" has recently been moved into this newly created family. The bird sports a strange and distinctive tooth on the cutting edge of the lower mandible. We enjoyed a good run on this species, with four separate sightings. First off a pair were seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, with another bird seen around the parking lot of Bellavista at a hummer stop there. At Paz de las Aves one bird came in and fed on fruit right out in front of the blind where it remained perched for some time, just 5 or so meters away. Also at the latter venue we also bumped into a pair coming through with a flock that also held **Orange-breasted Fruiteater** and **Beryl-spangled and Metallic-green Tanagers**.***TOUCANS****RAMPHASTIDAE**

Crimson-rumped Toucanet

*Aulacorhynchus haematopygus**A single bird slinked through the trees in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, and two separate birds were seen much better at Paz de las Aves, including one bird that came in to check out the fruit there along with **Sickle-winged Guans**, **Toucan Barbet**, and an **Olivaceous Piha**.***Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan*****Andigena laminirostris****One of Tandayapa's undoubted star attractions is this multicolored toucan. Mountain-toucans are all found within the Andes and are often quite localized. A pair were seen during our first morning in the Tandayapa Valley, with many others heard while we up there.***Collared (Pale-mandibled) Aracari*****Pteroglossus torquatus erythrogyius****One of the highlights of our bird-packed day at Milpe involved chancing upon a tree full of toucans late in the day, that included at least three **Chestnut-mandibled Toucans**, at least four **Chóco Toucans**, and at least two of these small toucans. A great sight. A couple more were seen at close range within the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary the following day too.*

NB. In the field guide Ridgely and Greenfield consider this pale-billed form that is restricted to the Chóco region a separate species, although most authors now seem to include it within Collared Aracari.

Chestnut-mandibled Toucan

*Ramphastos swainsonii**At least three birds were seen calling in a tree at Milpe, that also held both **Chóco Toucans** and **Collared Aracaris**. A magical tree to find at the end of a long days birding in the foothills.*

Chocó Toucan	<i>Ramphastos brevis</i>
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At least ten birds were seen late on along the Milpe Road, including four of which that shared a tree with three calling **Chestnut-mandibled Toucans** and at least two **Collared Aracaris**.

WOODPECKERS

PICIDAE

Olivaceous Piculet	<i>Picumnus olivaceus</i>
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This tiny woodpecker graced us in the Silanche area a few times, when it invariably turned up in one of the many feeding flocks that roam the area.

Black-cheeked Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes pucherani</i>
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A number of these striking birds was seen in the Silanche area.

Scarlet-backed Woodpecker	<i>Veniliornis callonotus</i>
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A nice find by Tim along the Milpe Road in the afternoon.

Smoky-brown Woodpecker	<i>Veniliornis fumigatus</i>
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One was found within a mixed feeding flock, (that also held a **Brown-billed Scythebill** and **Glistening-green Tanager** to name a few), in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Red-rumped Woodpecker	<i>Veniliornis kirkii</i>
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A single bird came through in a mixed flock at Rio Silanche.

Golden-olive Woodpecker	<i>Colaptes rubiginosus</i>
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Recorded at three sites on the trip: Tandayapa Lodge, Milpe, and Rio Silanche.

Crimson-mantled Woodpecker	<i>Colaptes rivolii</i>
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One of the smartest Ecuadorian woodpeckers that we saw first while we made our way to Tandayapa Lodge along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, and later another turned up next to a **Beautiful Jay** in the Tandayapa Valley.

Cinnamon Woodpecker	<i>Celeus loricatus</i>
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A pair were seen distantly sitting on a high palm spike in Rio Silanche reserve.

Lineated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus lineatus</i>
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A single bird was seen in the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Guayaquil Woodpecker	<i>Campephilus gayaquilensis</i>
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A pair of these striking woodpeckers was seen on our way into the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary that unfortunately narrowly escaped my camera lens.

OVENBIRDS

FURNARIIDAE: FURNARIINAE

Pale-legged (Pacific) Hornero	<i>Furnarius leucopus cinnamomeus</i>
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Recorded a few times in open country in the lowlands and foothills.

Azara's Spinetail	<i>Synallaxis azarae</i>
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One was seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Slaty Spinetail	<i>Synallaxis brachyura</i>
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One showed well in a young plantation that bordered Rio Silanche reserve.

Red-faced Spinetail	<i>Cranioleuca erythroptera</i>
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First seen in the Lower Tandayapa Valley, with others recorded in the foothills at Milpe and in the subtropical forests at Paz de las Aves.

H Spotted Barbtail	<i>Premnoplex brunnescens</i>
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Heard a couple of times in the Tandayapa Valley.

Pearled Treerunner	<i>Margarornis squamiger</i>
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Seen in both Yanacocha and the Tandayapa Valley.

Streaked Tuftedcheek	<i>Pseudocolaptes boissonneautii</i>
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Several sightings were made within the Tandayapa Valley, in mixed feeding flocks.

Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner	<i>Anabacerthia variegaticeps</i>
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While chasing mixed feeding flocks at Milpe we found a few of these striking ovenbirds hiding out within them. Another was seen along the lower part of the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

Lineated Foliage-gleaner	<i>Syndactyla subalaris</i>
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A couple were found within Milpe's mixed feeding flocks.

H Striped (Western) Woodhaunter	<i>Hyloctistes subulatus assimilis</i>
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A distant bird was heard within the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner	<i>Philydor rufum</i>
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*Along with **Lineated and Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaners**, turned up in the ovenbird-rich feeding flocks in the foothills of Milpe.*

Striped Treehunter	<i>Thripadectes holostictus</i>
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One was seen along the Old Nono-Mindo Road. A skulking bamboo-dwelling furnariid.

Streak-capped Treehunter	<i>Thripadectes virgaticeps</i>
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One was seen first right by the main highway near Mindo, with another seen much closer from the blind at Tandayapa Lodge later on the trip.

WOODCREEPERS

FURNARIIDAE: DENDROCOLAPTINAE

Plain-brown Woodcreeper	<i>Dendrocincla fuliginosa</i>
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One was seen at Milpe and another was seen in Rio Silanche.

Wedge-billed Woodcreeper	<i>Glyphorhynchus spirurus</i>
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Recorded in some of the feeding flocks at Milpe.

Strong-billed Woodcreeper	<i>Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus</i>
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A pair of these large (though inconspicuous) woodcreepers were seen at Paz de las Aves.

Northern Barred-Woodcreeper	<i>Dendrocolaptes sanctithomae</i>
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A single of this scarce woodcreeper was seen in Rio Silanche.

Black-striped Woodcreeper	<i>Xiphorhynchus lachrymosus</i>
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One showed well on the fringe of a large feeding flock in Rio Silanche.

Spotted Woodcreeper	<i>Xiphorhynchus erythropygius</i>
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Two were seen in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary, within a large feeding flock.

Streak-headed Woodcreeper	<i>Lepidocolaptes souleyetii</i>
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One was seen at Rio Silanche.

Montane Woodcreeper	<i>Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger</i>
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Recorded several times in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, and later around Paz de las Aves.

Brown-billed Scythebill	<i>Campylorhamphus pusillus</i>
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*One came through in a frantic mixed flock (that also held a **Glistening-green Tanager**), at Milpe.*

TYPICAL ANTBRIDS

THAMNOPHILIDAE

Western Slaty-Antshrike	<i>Thamnophilus atrinucha</i>
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A male sat quietly in our 'scope at Rio Silanche.

Russet Antshrike	<i>Thamnistes anabatinus</i>
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Two sightings were made in two different reserves in Milpe.

H	Spot-crowned Antwreio	<i>Dysithamnus puncticeps</i>
<i>A singing bird was heard from the tower in the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.</i>		
	Pacific Antwren	<i>Myrmotherula pacifica</i>
<i>A pair were found as made our way to Rio Silanche reserve.</i>		
	White-flanked Antwren	<i>Myrmotherula axillaris</i>
<i>A pair were seen in a dense forest tangle along a trail at Rio Silanche.</i>		
H	Slaty Antwren	<i>Myrmotherula schisticolor</i>
<i>Heard within a large fast-moving flock at Milpe.</i>		
H	Long-tailed Antbird	<i>Drymophila caudata</i>
<i>Heard calling from a dense stand of bamboo in the Tandayapa Valley, although could not be tempted out.</i>		
	Rufous-rumped Antwren	<i>Terenura callinota</i>
<i>A calling bird was in a mixed feeding flock within a small private reserve at Milpe.</i>		
	Dusky Antbird	<i>Cercomacra tyrannina</i>
<i>One was seen skulking in the underbrush close to Rio Silanche reserve.</i>		
H	Chestnut-backed Antbird	<i>Myrmeciza exsul</i>
<i>Heard a number of times around Rio Silanche.</i>		
	Stub-tailed Antbird	<i>Myrmeciza berlepschi</i>
<i>For the guide anyway one of the highlights of our time in the lowlands was everyone getting spanking views of a male that emerged out of the undergrowth and perched for some time on an open stalk in the Rio Silanche Sanctuary. He even allowed us time for pictures!</i>		
	Immaculate Antbird	<i>Myrmeciza immaculata</i>
<i>A pair were seen very well close to the parking lot at the Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and the "resident" pair also came in to glean bugs off the nightlight outside the blind at Tandayapa Lodge for extreme close ups.</i>		

ANTTHRUSHES

FORMICARIIDAE

H	Black-headed Antthrush	<i>Formicarius nigricapillus</i>
<i>Heard just as we had to leave Rio Silanche.</i>		
H	Rufous-breasted Antthrush	<i>Formicarius rufipectus</i>
<i>A couple of distant birds were heard calling along the trails at Tandayapa Lodge.</i>		

ANTPITTAS

GRALLARIIDAE

	Giant Antpitta	<i>Grallaria gigantea</i>
<i>One of the biggest shocks was Harvey asking me "what is this bird?" and then promptly showing me a photo of the bird (full frame) that he had just taken by the toilet block at Bellavista. We then dropped everything and checked it out and happily it came back a few times and wandered around within just a few meters of us over the course of the next 45 minutes. We also saw another three birds at Paz de las Aves, THE place for antpittas in the northwest. One of the birds came and fed on worms by the blind for the fruit feeders, so we could look one way and take in a Toucan Barbet or Sickle-winged Guan, or look the other way and see a Giant Antpitta bouncing around on the steps that lead down to the blind, just a few meters from where we were. It is easy to forget that just five years ago these were near mythical creatures, although Angel Paz changed all that when he habituated several birds with incredible results.</i>		
	Chestnut-crowned Antpitta	<i>Grallaria ruficapilla</i>
<i>One bird was lured in within the Tandayapa Valley, where they were frequently heard calling.</i>		

Yellow-breasted Antpitta	Grallaria flavotincta
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One of Angel's regular antpittas came in after a nerve-racking twenty minutes or so (at Paz de las Aves), whereupon it gave crippling views beside a fast-flowing mountain stream. So much so that it beat many other top birds into final contention for the bird of the trip, although just narrowly missed out on making the top three.

H Rufous Antpitta	Grallaria rufula
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Heard calling a number of times at Yanacocha.

TAPACULOS

RHINOCRYPTIDAE

H Blackish (Unicolored) Tapaculo	Scytalopus (unicolor) latrans
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Regularly heard calling in Yanacocha.

H Nariño Tapaculo	Scytalopus vicinior
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Heard calling several times in the Tandayapa Valley.

Spillman's Tapaculo	Scytalopus spillmanni
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Miraculously a bird popped up (without any use of recordings or playback) along the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

Ocellated Tapaculo	Acropternis orthonyx
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One of the contenders for the bird of the trip, just pipped to top spot by Booted Racket-tail, although beating the vivid vermilion form of Andean Cock-of-the-rock into second place. This as with all tapaculos is downright difficult to see, being a really skulking and furtive species. We heard one close up just after playing a tape along a known stretch for it on the Old Nono-Mindo Road. We rushed to the spot, played the tape just briefly again, and within seconds our eagle-eyed driver Jorge announced calmly that he had the bird. As it turned out the bird was sitting in a fairly open spot and with some rapid head movements we all managed to get a good clean look at this polka-dotted bird. Another was heard calling upslope on our first morning at Yanacocha.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

TYRANNIDAE

Brown-capped Tyrannulet	Ornithion brunneicapillus
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A calling bird came in extremely close, along the road into Rio Silanche reserve.

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet	Camptostoma obsoletum
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A single bird was found in an area of secondary growth along the Milpe Road.

White-tailed Tyrannulet	Mecocerculus poecilocercus
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Several were found within mixed feeding flocks along the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

White-banded Tyrannulet	Mecocerculus stictopterus
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Seen within a mixed feeding flock along the Inca Trail within Yanacocha reserve.

White-throated Tyrannulet	Mecocerculus leucophrys
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A few turned up in the few mixed flocks we encountered during our first morning at Yanacocha.

Rufous-winged Tyrannulet	Mecocerculus calopterus
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One was seen at Paz de las Aves.

Tufted Tit-Tyrant	Anairetes parulus
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A couple were seen in the dry country of Calacali.

Gray Elaenia	Myiopagis caniceps
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A male bird was scoped up in the canopy at Rio Silanche

Yellow-bellied Elaenia	Elaenia flavogaster
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One was seen on the edge of a palm plantation en-route to Rio Silanche.

White-crested Elaenia	<i>Elaenia albiceps</i>
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Two birds were seen in the Yanacocha area.

Streak-necked Flycatcher	<i>Mionectes striaticollis</i>
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Recorded in the Tandayapa Valley, and also along the Chiriboga Road.

Olive-striped Flycatcher	<i>Mionectes olivaceus</i>
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One was seen at Milpe.

Ochre-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Mionectes oleagineus</i>
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A single bird was seen in a vine tangle in the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Slaty-capped Flycatcher	<i>Leptopogon superciliaris</i>
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A single was seen at Milpe, and another showed to the leader only in Rio Silanche.

Sooty-headed Tyrannulet	<i>Phyllomyias griseiceps</i>
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A small, vocal group of these small flycatchers was seen in an area of secondary growth in Silanche.

Black-capped Tyrannulet	<i>Phyllomyias nigrocapillus</i>
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Doug and I caught sight of a bird trying to sneak past with a mixed feeding flock along the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

Chocó (Golden-faced) Tyrannulet	<i>Zimmerius (chrysops) albigularis</i>
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Seen at both Milpe and Silanche.

NB.

The *albigularis* "race" of Golden-faced Tyrannulet, (that is confined to the Chóco region), was recently elevated to a full species (December 2008), as it is thought to be more closely related to **Paltry Tyrannulet *Z. vilissimus*** than Golden-faced.

Ornate Flycatcher	<i>Myiotriccus ornatus</i>
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Two birds were seen in Milpe.

Bronze-olive Pygmy-Tyrant	<i>Pseudotriccus pelzelni</i>
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One was seen all too briefly unfortunately along the Old Nono-Mindo Road near San Tadeo.

H Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant	<i>Pseudotriccus ruficeps</i>
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Heard in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant	<i>Lophotriccus pileatus</i>
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One was seen in Milpe.

H Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher	<i>Todirostrum nigriceps</i>
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A couple of calling birds were heard around Silanche, although could not be located in the dense canopies they were calling from.

Yellow-margined Flycatcher (Flatbill)	<i>Tolmomyias assimilis flavotectus</i>
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Our last find of the day at Rio Silanche, was one of these birds coming through with a mixed flock by the parking lot.

Cinnamon Flycatcher	<i>Pyrrhomyias cinnamomeus</i>
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Several of these bright flycatchers turned up in mixed flocks in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher	<i>Myiobius sulphureipygius</i>
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One put in a brief appearance at Rio Silanche.

Flavescent Flycatcher	<i>Myiophobus flavicans</i>
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A couple were seen along the Old Nono-Mindo Road near to San Tadeo.

H Bran-colored Flycatcher	<i>Myiophobus fasciatus</i>
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Heard along the Milpe Road, and also the next day en-route to Rio Silanche.

Smoke-colored Pewee	<i>Contopus fumigatus</i>
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Noted a couple of times in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>
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Two were seen sitting on rocks along a small river near to Paz de las Aves.

GO White-tailed Shrike-Tyrant	<i>Agriornis albicauda</i>
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Probably the biggest disappointment of the trip was lining this rare bird up in the 'scope, only for it to disappear before anyone got a look, just before we had to leave Calacali right at the end of the trip.

H Smoky Bush-Tyrant	<i>Myiotheretes fumigatus</i>
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Heard calling downslope at Yanacocha.

Masked Water-Tyrant	<i>Fluvicola nengeta</i>
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A small group of these charming flycatchers was found late in the afternoon along the Milpe Road, around a cow paddock. Another single bird was seen en-route to Rio Silanche.

Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant	<i>Ochthoeca diadema</i>
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Two sightings were made in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant	<i>Ochthoeca cinnamomeiventris</i>
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One of these smart chat-tyrants was seen along a rushing Andean stream in the Alambi Valley on the first day.

Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant	<i>Ochthoeca fumicolor</i>
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One was seen as we were leaving Yanacocha.

Bright-rumped Attila	<i>Attila spadiceus</i>
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An olive morph bird was scoped at close range en-route to the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Dusky-capped Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tuberculifer</i>
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Seen during our steamy days in the lowlands and foothills, at Milpe and Silanche.

Boat-billed Flycatcher	<i>Megarynchus pitangua</i>
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A pair showed up at Rio Silanche.

Rusty-margined Flycatcher	<i>Myiozetetes cayanensis</i>
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Regularly encountered along the Milpe Road, and around Rio Silanche.

Gray-capped Flycatcher	<i>Myiozetetes granadensis</i>
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A pair were seen on the edge of a palm plantation en-route to the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

H White-ringed Flycatcher	<i>Conopias albobittatus</i>
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Heard calling for a long period along a forest trail at Rio Silanche, where we just could not get an angle on their position.

Golden-crowned Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes chrysocephalus</i>
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Recorded several times along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, and also at Tandayapa Lodge.

Streaked Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes maculatus</i>
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Two of these large, boldly marked flycatchers were seen at Rio Silanche.

Snowy-throated Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus niveigularis</i>
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An austral migrant to Ecuador, we saw two birds along the Milpe Road.

Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>
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Commonly encountered in the lowlands and foothills.

COTINGAS

COTINGIDAE

Red-crested Cotinga	<i>Ampelion rubrocristatus</i>
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Two birds were found just outside the Yanacocha reserve.

Green-and-black Fruiteater	<i>Pipreola riefferii</i>
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A couple of males were found in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

H Barred Fruiteater	<i>Pipreola arcuata</i>
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Several calling birds could not be tempted downslope at Yanacocha.

Orange-breasted Fruiteater	<i>Pipreola jucunda</i>
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A big highlight of our time at Paz de las Aves was coming across a bright male bird within a large feeding flock, that allowed us all to get 'scope views of its sooty black hood, emerald green back, and jaffa orange breast. A very smart Chóco species that made it into the final list of **contenders for bird of the trip**.

Andean Cock-of-the-rock	<i>Rupicola peruvianus</i>
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One of the most quintessentially Andean species, that is often understandably right at the top of the wish list for tour participants. We checked on a lek site in the Alambi Valley on the way to Tandayapa Lodge where we picked up at least four different displaying males. Later on the trip we also checked another lek on Angel's property, Paz de las Aves, where a purpose-built blind allowed us views of at least two different scarlet males. A really smashing bird that was third on the list at the end of the trip when it came to vote for the **contenders for the bird of the trip**, just beaten to top spot by the charismatic **Ocellated Tapaculo**, and the just plain cute **Booted Racket-tail**.

Olivaceous Piha	<i>Snowornis cryptolophus</i>
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The cotingas are an extremely diverse family, some of them being vocal and loud species (like the cock-of-the-rock), while others are inconspicuous, and rarely vocalize. The Olivaceous Piha falls into the latter category and so can be hard to find. We were fortunate to see a bird come in really close when it came to feed on bananas at Angel's fruit feeders at Paz de las Aves, that were also enjoyed by a **Toucan Barbet**, **Crimson-rumped Toucanet**, and a rowdy mob of **Sickle-winged Guans**.

Purple-throated Fruitcrow	<i>Querula purpurata</i>
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This is one of the most vocal cotingas, that helped us to locate a pair of them in Rio Silanche.

Long-wattled Umbrellabird	<i>Cephalopterus penduliger</i>
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The biggest shock of the tour was looking and up and seeing the massive black form of this ultra-rare Chóco species sitting on an open vine above us. My desperate and excited shouts did nothing to deter the bird thankfully that remained in the area for the next ten minutes or so, letting us all ogle it thoroughly in the process. This would have been my choice for the **bird of the trip**, although it did not even make it into the list of seventeen contenders at our farewell dinner in Quito!

MANAKINS

PIPRIDAE

Golden-winged Manakin	<i>Masius chrysopterus</i>
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A jet black, golden-capped male was seen at both Milpe, Paz de las Aves, and at Tandayapa Lodge.

Club-winged Manakin	<i>Machaeropterus deliciosus</i>
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For at least one member of the group voted for as the **top bird of the trip**. We saw a few different males in the throws of their strange displays, when they thrust their black-and-white wings in the air, making a bizarre mechanically produced "beeping" noise in the process. Milpe's star attraction.

White-bearded Manakin	<i>Manacus manacus</i>
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Their loud wing snaps were heard at both Milpe and Silanche, with one male putting in an appearance at the latter site.

TITYRAS AND ALLIES**TITYRIDAE**

Masked Tityra	<i>Tityra semifasciata</i>
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A pair were 'scoped up en-route to Rio Silanche.

Barred Becard	<i>Pachyramphus versicolor</i>
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*One was seen in a large mixed feeding flock with **Streaked Tuftedcheeks, Pearled Treerunners** and a **Black-capped Tyrannulet**, along the Old Nono-Mindo Road. Another was seen at Paz de las Aves.*

Cinnamon Becard	<i>Pachyramphus cinnamomeus</i>
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Recorded a number of times (invariably in a mixed flock), at Milpe and Silanche.

White-winged Becard	<i>Pachyramphus polychopterus dorsalis</i>
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One was seen in the foothills at Milpe, and later in the subtropics in the Tandayapa Valley.

One-colored Becard	<i>Pachyramphus homochrous</i>
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Several were seen in Milpe.

VIREOS**VIREONIDAE**

Brown-capped Vireo	<i>Vireo leucophrys</i>
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Several turned up in mixed flocks in the Tandayapa Valley.

Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>
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Recorded in the Tandayapa Valley, Milpe and Silanche.

Lesser Greenlet	<i>Hylophilus decurtatus</i>
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A few were found within mixed flocks at Rio Silanche.

Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo	<i>Vireolanius leucotis</i>
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A single bird (that called incessantly the whole time, as is their way), was found in a large mixed flock in a small private reserve in Milpe.

CROWS JAYS AND MAGPIES**CORVIDAE**

Turquoise Jay	<i>Cyanolyca turcosa</i>
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A mob of these noisy and equally beautiful jays were found in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Beautiful Jay	<i>Cyanolyca pulchra</i>
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*Another worthy **contender for bird of the trip**, that we ran into twice during the trip. Firstly we found a pair at a known spot in the Tandayapa Valley, that involved quite a bit of neck-straining and a good deal of "jay neck" resulted from this! On our last day though we had fantastic views behind a small cafe on the way back to Quito, where one bird came within 15 feet of us and remained there for some time. A very well-named bird indeed.*

SWALLOWS**HIRUNDINIDAE**

Blue-and-white Swallow	<i>Pygochelidon cyanoleuca</i>
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The commonest swallow on the tour, only not recorded on our morning at Yanacocha.

Brown-bellied Swallow	<i>Orochelidon murina</i>
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This temperate swallow was regularly seen hawking insects above the trail at Yanacocha, and was also seen in the high dry country of Calacali on our final afternoon.

White-thighed Swallow	<i>Atticora tibialis</i>
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A good number of these swallows were found along the Milpe Road.

Southern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx ruficollis</i>
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Commonly recorded in the lowlands and foothills.

WRENS**TROGLODYTIDAE**

Band-backed Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus zonatus</i>
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A pair were found in an area of open farmland along the Milpe Road.

Rufous Wren	<i>Cinnycerthia unirufa</i>
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A handful of these highland wrens were seen in Yanacocha on our first morning.

Sharpe's (Sepia-brown) Wren	<i>Cinnycerthia olivascens</i>
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A small party of these skulking wrens were found within a fast moving flock along the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

H Plain-tailed Wren	<i>Thryothorus euophrys</i>
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This bamboo-loving wren was heard calling several times from thick stands of chusquea bamboo in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, but could not be tempted into an opening.

H Bay Wren	<i>Thryothorus nigricapillus</i>
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Heard around Rio Silanche and Milpe.

Stripe-throated Wren	<i>Thryothorus leucopogon</i>
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This tricky wren was found within a dark tangle along a forest trail at Rio Silanche.

House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
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One was seen at Milpe, and others were heard in other areas.

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren	<i>Henicorhina leucophrys</i>
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A common sound in the Tandayapa Valley, where a few were seen. Another bird was also seen in the foothills (where they have a markedly different song) at Milpe.

DIPPERS**CINCLIDAE**

White-capped Dipper	<i>Cinclus leucocephalus</i>
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A pair put in a start performance during our first afternoon along the Rio Alambi.

GNATCATCHERS**POLIOPTILIDAE**

Slate-throated Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila schistaceigula</i>
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Tim did well to find this scarce gnatcatcher hiding out in a fast-moving feeding flock at Rio Silanche.

THRUSHES AND ALLIES**TURDIDAE**

Andean Solitaire	<i>Myadestes ralloides</i>
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One came in really well late one afternoon in the Tandayapa Valley. Their rich fluty songs were heard regularly in the same valley and also at Paz de las Aves. One of the most beautiful songsters in the Andes.

Spectacled (Ecuadorian) Thrush	<i>Turdus nudigenis maculirostris</i>
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One was seen really well shortly before dusk along the Milpe Road.

Great Thrush	<i>Turdus fuscater</i>
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Commonly encountered throughout the highlands.

WAGTAILS AND PIPITS**MOTACILLIDAE**

Paramo Pipit	<i>Anthus bogotensis</i>
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*One came overhead while we played a tape along a section of open agricultural areas in the highlands near Yanacocha reserve, minutes before a ringtail **Cinereous Harrier** swooped in low over the very same field in front of us.*

NEW WORLD WARBLERS**PARULIDAE**

Tropical Parula	<i>Parula pitiayumi</i>
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A few of these sprightly warblers were seen around Milpe.

Olive-crowned Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis semiflava</i>
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A male posed nicely for us along the Milpe Road.

Slate-throated Redstart (Whitestart)	<i>Myioborus miniatus</i>
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Regularly encountered in the Tandayapa Valley and at Paz de las Aves, and Milpe.

Spectacled Redstart (Whitestart)	<i>Myioborus melanocephalus</i>
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This highland redstart was recorded within mixed feeding flocks at Yanacocha in the temperate zone, and also in the Upper Tandayapa, that lies within the Upper Subtropical zone.

Golden-bellied (Chocó) Warbler	<i>Basileuterus chrysogaster chlorophrys</i>
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Several were seen (and heard calling incessantly) within mixed flocks in the foothills at Milpe. NB. This "species" was recently (December 2008) lumped within **Golden-bellied Warbler**, that occurs on the eastern side of the Andes in Peru.

Black-crested Warbler	<i>Basileuterus nigrocristatus</i>
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A delightful highland warbler that we saw very well along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, just beyond the Tandayapa Ridge.

Russet-crowned Warbler	<i>Basileuterus coronatus</i>
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Seen on a few occasions in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Three-striped Warbler	<i>Basileuterus tristriatus</i>
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Seen in the subtropical zone within the Tandayapa Valley, and then later down in the foothills at Milpe.

Buff-rumped Warbler	<i>Phaeothlypis fulvicauda</i>
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One of these ground-dwelling "river warblers" was seen hopping around the flower beds by the parking lot at Milpe on arrival.

BANANAQUIT**COEREBIDAE**

Bananaquit	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>
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Seen coming to the hummer feeders at both Tandayapa Lodge and within the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

TANAGERS AND ALLIES**THRAUPIDAE**

Superciliated Hemispingus	<i>Hemispingus superciliaris</i>
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Four birds were seen within mixed flocks along the "Inca Trail" at Yanacocha.

Cinereous Conebill	<i>Conirostrum cinereum</i>
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Two singles were seen associating with some highland feeding flocks at Yanacocha.

Blue-backed Conebill	<i>Conirostrum sitticolor</i>
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A flock regular at Yanacocha.

Capped Conebill	<i>Conirostrum albifrons</i>
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Recorded within the Upper Tandayapa Valley, and also around Paz de las Aves.

Plush-capped Finch (Plushcap)	<i>Catamblyrhynchus diadema</i>
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A star find on our last day in thick chusquea bamboo in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Dusky Bush-Tanager	<i>Chlorospingus semifuscus</i>
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Arguably the least impressive of all the Chóco specialties, found within some understorey flocks in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Yellow-throated Bush-Tanager	<i>Chlorospingus flavigularis</i>
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A few parties were seen in the foothill forests of Milpe.

Guira Tanager	<i>Hemithraupis guira</i>
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Three birds were seen around Rio Silanche.

Dusky-faced Tanager	<i>Mitrospingus cassinii</i>
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A noisy group of these understorey tanagers had us scrambling out of the bus at Rio Silanche.

Ochre-breasted Tanager	<i>Chlorothraupis stolzmanni</i>
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Noisy mobs of these large chunky tanagers were seen a couple of times in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Scarlet-browed Tanager	<i>Heterospingus xanthopygius</i>
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A huge mixed flock came through a large cecropia tree at Rio Silanche, that allowed us some great 'scope looks at some of these Chóco endemics.

White-shouldered Tanager	<i>Tachyphonus luctuosus</i>
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Recorded a number of times around Rio Silanche.

Tawny-crested Tanager	<i>Tachyphonus delatrii</i>
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One group came through with a large mixed flock in the lowlands of Silanche.

White-winged Tanager	<i>Piranga leucoptera</i>
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A pair were picked up in a small private reserve in Milpe.

Flame-rumped (Lemon-rumped) Tanager	<i>Ramphocelus flammigerus icteronotus</i>
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*One of the commonest tanagers in the lowlands and foothills. It is also pretty spectacular (the black and lemon males that is), and was nominated as a **contender for bird of the trip** at our final farewell dinner.*

Blue-gray Tanager	<i>Thraupis episcopus</i>
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Regularly recorded in Milpe and Rio Silanche, and also seen high in the Tandayapa Valley too.

Palm Tanager	<i>Thraupis palmarum</i>
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Regularly recorded around Rio Silanche, with a few seen at Milpe too.

Blue-capped Tanager	<i>Thraupis cyanocephala</i>
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Seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley and in Paz de las Aves.

Hooded Mountain-Tanager	<i>Buthraupis montana</i>
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A good party of three birds were found within the Upper Tandayapa Valley. One of the largest mountain-tanagers.

Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager	<i>Anisognathus igniventris</i>
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A number of birds were seen along the trail at Yanacocha, and another sighting was made on the higher sections of the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager	<i>Anisognathus somptuosus</i>
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*A common tanager and flock follower in the subtropical forests around Tandayapa. A few dropped into the fruit feeders on the veranda at Tandayapa Lodge too. One of the smartest tanagers too, that was not lost on our group who nominated it as a **contender for bird of the trip**.*

Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager	<i>Anisognathus notabilis</i>
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We had hoped this Chóco species would make our life easier and drop in at Angel's fruit feeders at Paz de las Aves, but alas no we had to work for it. However, as we made our way back along the Old Nono-Mindo Road from there we picked up a bird perched right out in the open on the top of a tree, allowing us great 'scope looks.

Grass-green Tanager	<i>Chlorornis riefferii</i>
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Several were seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, on all occasions with passing flocks.

Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager	<i>Dubusia taeniata</i>
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Another great find by Tim as we made our way to Tandayapa Lodge from Yanacocha on our first day. A scarce bird on the western side of the Andes in Ecuador.

Fawn-breasted Tanager	<i>Pipraeidea melanonota</i>
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One came through with a mixed flock at Paz de las Aves, while we waiting for the male **Orange-breasted Fruiteater** to show up (which thankfully he did!)

Glistening-green Tanager	<i>Chlorochrysa phoenicotis</i>
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An erratic visitor to the Milpe area, that had been AWOL in recent weeks. Therefore, I was pretty pleased to see one of these glowing green tanagers within a large mixed flock (that also held **Brown-billed Scythebill** and a number of **Ochre-breasted Tanagers** too), and another was later picked up by Larry in another small reserve in the same area.

Gray-and-gold Tanager	<i>Tangara palmeri</i>
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Three of these poorly named tanagers came into a tree and allowed us to 'scope them as we made our way through an area of secondary growth en-route to the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Golden Tanager	<i>Tangara arthus</i>
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A regular tanager in the subtropics around Tandayapa and Paz de las Aves, with a few more also recorded in the foothills at Milpe.

Silver-throated Tanager	<i>Tangara icterocephala</i>
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We first saw a couple as we quietly waiting for it to darken so we could look for the **Lyre-tailed Nightjar** in the Lower Tandayapa Valley, and others were seen in Milpe, and the Rio Silanche area.

Flame-faced Tanager	<i>Tangara parzudakii</i>
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For me one of the smartest of all the Andean tanagers (although it did not even make it into the final list of contenders for bird of the trip surprisingly), that we saw really well at both Milpe and Paz de las Aves.

Rufous-throated Tanager	<i>Tangara rufigula</i>
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A few of this distinctive Chóco species were found within a tanager flock at Milpe, that also held **Flame-faced Tanagers**, and others.

Bay-headed Tanager	<i>Tangara gyrola</i>
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Recorded around Milpe and Silanche.

Golden-naped Tanager	<i>Tangara ruficervix</i>
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A number of these electric blue tanagers were found within mixed flocks in the Tandayapa Valley, Paz de las Aves and in the foothills at Milpe too.

Metallic-green Tanager	<i>Tangara labradorides</i>
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A few were seen in mixed tanager flocks (with **Beryl-spangled Tanagers**, **Flame-faced Tanagers**, and **Fawn-breasted Tanager** among others) at Paz de las Aves.

Blue-necked Tanager	<i>Tangara cyanicollis</i>
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A couple were first seen by the parking lot at the Milpe Bird Sanctuary, with further birds seen the following day around Rio Silanche.

Golden-hooded Tanager	<i>Tangara larvata</i>
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Two were seen in the lowlands around Rio Silanche.

Beryl-spangled Tanager	<i>Tangara nigroviridis</i>
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This striking highland tanager was seen a number of times in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, and at Paz de las Aves.

Blue-and-black Tanager	<i>Tangara vassorii</i>
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One small group was found in a large mixed flock along the Old Nono-Mindo Road that also held a few **Streaked Tuftedcheeks**, **Barred Becard**, **Black-capped Tyrannulet**, **Grass-green Tanager**, and **Scarlet-bellied and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers**.

Black-capped Tanager	<i>Tangara heinei</i>
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One was seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and another on the way out of Paz de las Aves.

Black-faced (Yellow-tufted) Dacnis	<i>Dacnis lineata aequatorialis</i>
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This is one extremely smart tanager that surprisingly failed to make the grade into the final selection for contender for bird of the trip. A small group of them were seen along the Milpe Road.

NB.

In the Ecuador field guide this "form" is split off as a separate species, **Yellow-tufted Dacnis**, although it is not currently split in Clements and is still included within the wider ranging **Black-faced Dacnis**.

Green Honeycreeper	<i>Chlorophanes spiza</i>
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A couple of females were seen in Milpe.

Purple Honeycreeper	<i>Cyanerpes caeruleus</i>
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Several males and females were loosely associating with a tanager flock at Milpe that also held **Rufous-throated Tanager**, and **Flame-faced Tanager** among others.

Swallow-Tanager	<i>Tersina viridis</i>
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A number of these upright tanagers were seen "standing sentry" along the Milpe Road.

SPARROWS AND SEEDEATERS

EMBERIZIDAE

Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch	<i>Phrygilus plebejus</i>
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A couple of these dowdy "finches" were seen at Calacali.

Blue-black Grassquit	<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>
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A male posed by the bus just before we entered the Rio Silanche reserve.

Variable Seedeater	<i>Sporophila corvina</i>
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Seen a number of times in the lowlands around Silanche.

Black-and-white Seedeater	<i>Sporophila luctuosa</i>
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A male was seen along the Milpe Road, where it is a little lower than they are usually found in western Ecuador (although in other parts of its range it is commonly found this low).

Yellow-bellied Seedeater	<i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>
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A number of these seedeaters were seen on the Milpe Road and around Rio Silanche.

Thick-billed (Lesser) Seed-Finch	<i>Oryzoborus (angolensis) funereus</i>
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A female was seen feeding with a male **Black-and-white Seedeater** along the Milpe Road.

Band-tailed Seedeater	<i>Catamenia analis</i>
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A couple of distant birds were 'scoped at Calacali.

Plain-colored Seedeater	<i>Catamenia inornata</i>
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A small group were seen as we were leaving Yanacocha.

Glossy Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa lafresnayii</i>
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Commonly encountered at Yanacocha, where they came into to steal sugar water from the hummingbird feeders with the **Masked Flowerpiercers** there.

White-sided Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa albilatera</i>
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One female was seen probing some flowers along the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

Masked Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa cyaneus</i>
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Commonly seen along the trail at Yanacocha, where they joined with **Glossy Flowerpiercers** in stealing sugar water from the hummer feeders.

Tanager Finch	<i>Oreothraupis arremonops</i>
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Arguably the rarest bird of the trip, that sometimes gets forgotten as the Tandayapa Valley must be one of the most reliable sites for the species in the World. I tried for this early on in the Upper Tandayapa Valley as I feared it would require several attempts. I needn't have worried though as a pair performed in exemplary fashion, singing at very close range and even allowing themselves to be 'scoped full frame in the process. A very rare and localized Chóco species.

GO Tricolored Brush-Finch	<i>Atlapetes tricolor crassus</i>
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Just a brief couple of flight views in the Tandayapa Valley was a poor showing for this species.

Yellow-breasted (Rufous-naped) Brush-Finch	<i>Atlapetes latinuchus spodionotus</i>
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A few were seen moving through the understorey within the temperate zone at Yanacocha.

White-winged Brush-Finch	<i>Atlapetes leucopterus</i>
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A small party of these striking finches was seen over a delicious brunch of bolones and empanadas at Paz de las Aves.

Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch	<i>Arremon brunneinucha</i>
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One hopped around in front of the blind at Tandayapa Lodge on our final morning, and another put in a brief appearance from the veranda there a few days before.

H Stripe-headed Brush-Finch	<i>Arremon torquatus</i>
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One was heard calling distantly at Yanacocha on our first morning.

Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>
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This, one of Ecuador's commonest species was recorded at a number of different sites throughout.

SALTATORS AND CARDINALS

CARDINALIDAE

Buff-throated Saltator	<i>Saltator maximus</i>
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Several were seen in the area around Rio Silanche.

Black-winged Saltator	<i>Saltator atripennis</i>
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Seen in the foothills at Milpe, and later around Silanche too.

H Slate-colored Grosbeak	<i>Saltator grossus</i>
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A number of birds were heard calling at Milpe.

TROUPIALS AND ALLIES

ICTERIDAE

Scrub Blackbird	<i>Dives warszewiczi</i>
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A small group of these vocal icterids were seen close to the entrance of the Milpe Bird Sanctuary. They appear to be expanding their range in northwest Ecuador due to more open habitats created through deforestation.

Shiny Cowbird	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>
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A small group were sitting on wires close to a party of **Scrub Blackbirds** for nice side-by-side comparison.

Giant Cowbird	<i>Molothrus oryzivorus</i>
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One of these large icterids was found en-route to the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary.

Scarlet-rumped Cacique	<i>Cacicus uropygialis</i>
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In a hectic spell where we were just homing in on a **White-whiskered Puffbird**, (and an **Ochre-bellied Flycatcher** also popped up in tangle), one of these noisy birds came through in Rio Silanche.

SISKINS AND ALLIES**FRINGILLIDAE**

Orange-crowned Euphonia	<i>Euphonia saturata</i>
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One male was seen from the observation tower at Rio Silanche.

Golden-rumped Euphonia	<i>Euphonia cyanocephala</i>
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Eventually one of these birds gave themselves up at Calacali where despite being common they can be tough to track down. In the end we all had great looks at a powder-blue capped male, and there was also a female in the same area.

Orange-bellied Euphonia	<i>Euphonia xanthogaster</i>
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The commonest euphonia in the northwest, recorded in the Tandayapa Valley, Paz de las Aves, Milpe, and Rio Silanche.

H Hooded Siskin	<i>Carduelis magellanica</i>
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Heard calling from dense dry scrub in Calacali on our final afternoon.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS**PASSERIDAE**

House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
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Not always easy to find on this trip (not that anyone coming here cares about finding it!), we had a male bouncing around a gas station forecourt en-route to Rio Silanche.