

ECUADOR:
The Andes Introtour

28 November – 5 December, 2009



SWORD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD Yanacocha

*This extraordinary hummingbird has the longest bill to body size of any bird on Earth. This species made the number two spot during the voting for top three trip birds (just above another amazing hummingbird, the **Booted Racket-tail** seen in their dozens at Tandayapa Lodge, and just below the **Rufous Motmot** seen at Milpe, that was voted as the **TOP TRIP BIRD**).*

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All photos and tour report by Sam Woods/Tropical Birding

TOUR SUMMARY

This short tour is popular with people from all walks of birding life: offering beginners the opportunity to familiarize themselves with many neotropical families, and more experienced "listers" a shot at some of the most spectacular endemic species of the extremely diverse Chocó bioregion. By making day trips out of Tandayapa Lodge, and ensuring we visited a range of altitudes, (and therefore forest types), we had a shot at many of the endemic species that make this Chocó region so appealing to more experienced world birders too. The appeal of this tour was all too evident in the range of birders signed up. Some were visiting Ecuador, and even South America, for the first time, while others were more than a little familiar with the neotropical species on offer, having visited South America a number of times.

The tour began on the flanks of the "capital volcano", Pichincha, at Yanacocha (3400m/11 155ft). By the end of the day though we had dropped out of this temperate zone, and checked into Tandayapa Lodge, in the subtropical realm (1750m/5742ft). For a few days we checked out the myriad of birding options within subtropical forests in and around the Tandayapa Valley (1750-2300m/5742-7546ft), before spending several periods in the foothills around Milpe and Mashpi a little lower down (around 1100m/3609ft), and markedly different in terms of birds. We also made a foray into the Chocó lowlands at Rio Silanche (350m/1148ft). For our final, exciting mornings birding of the tour we checked out the so-called "Antpitta Farm" back in the subtropical zone, close to Mindo, before we traveled to Quito making a short stop in the dry, inter-Andean valley that Quito sits within, for a few final birds before enjoying a final farewell dinner and debate on the best birds of the trip.

The birding was spectacular, as recent drought conditions that had been plaguing Ecuador in recent months finally broke, bringing wetter weather, and subsequently heightened bird activity. Nowhere was this more evident than at the hummingbird feeders at Tandayapa Lodge, where we watched in amazement as 21 hummingbird species came in to feed in just over an hour one lunchtime, that included some rarities, like Little Woodstar, and stunning regional endemics like Empress Brilliant, Violet-tailed Sylph, and Western Emerald, in addition to swarms of the incomparable Booted Racket-tail, a real cartoon bird. Other highlights included an astounding list of 50 tanager species in just six days birding that included some truly awesome Chocó species like Glistening-green, Rufous-throated, and Blue-whiskered Tanagers, and Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager. Aside from that colorful crew a number of other regional endemics were found (40 of these Chocó endemics were tallied by the end of the tour), including the rare and beautiful Tanager Finch, the striking Black Solitaire, the multicolored Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan and Toucan Barbet, and breathtaking Orange-breasted Fruiteater. Although not an endemic, eight gaudy red male Andean Cock-of-the-rocks displaying on our first afternoon also deserve more than a worthy mention. The final flurry of the tour came with an incredible 4 antpitta species seen during our last fantastic morning in Mindo that brought our total tally to 7 antpitta species in just six days. Justifiably, this unique antpitta experience impressed both the beginner and experienced alike...

ITINERARY

November 28 **Arrival in Quito**
November 29 **Yanacocha & the Old Nono-Mindo Road**
November 30 **Tandayapa Valley**
December 1 **Milpe**
December 2 **Mashpi Forest & the Old Nono-Mindo Road**
December 3 **Rio Silanche**
December 4 **Refugio Paz de las Aves & Calacali**
December 5 **Departure**

*(Nights of November 28 & December 4 were spent in Quito; on all other nights- November 29 to December 3-we were based out of **Tandayapa Lodge**)

NOVEMBER 29

YANACOCHA Temperate *polylepis* elfin forest 3400m/11 155ft

THE OLD NONO-MINDO ROAD Subtropical forest 2300–1700m/7546-5577ft

A misty morning was spent in the mixed *polylepis* forest of **Yanacocha**, sifting through flocks, and watching highland hummingbirds crowd a number of well-stocked sugar feeders in this scenic reserve run by the **Jocotoco Conservation Foundation** (see www.fjocotoco.org/ for further details). Headlining that morning were a feisty pair of **Rufous Antpittas** that came in flicking their wings nervously to check out our tape right near the start of the *Inca Trail* that cuts through the heart of



this temperate reserve. Also in attendance in some of the flocks roaming the forests that cloak the slopes were a number of tanagers, including four different hulking mountain-tanagers: **Black-chested, Scarlet-bellied, Hooded Mountain-Tanager**, and the scarce **Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager** all appearing during our misty morning walk. Other flock species included a superb **Golden-crowned Tanager, Blue-backed Conebills**, a number of **Superciliaried Hemispingus**, and the odd **Pearled Treerunner**. Away from this flock fare, a pair of **White-browed Spinetails** dangled just a meter or so away from us. The fog may well have cost us a decent look at a **Barred Fruiteater** that came screaming into our tape, only for the fog to grow denser and completely conceal its hiding place!

At the hummingbird gardens near the end point of our morning walk we settled in and watched the feeding frenzy in front of us, as highland hummingbird species

darted in and out of the feeders. **Golden-breasted and Sapphire-vented Pufflegs** (see photo of latter on page 3), **Tyrrian Metaltails**, and **Buff-winged Starfrontlets** were all regular visitors, as were a couple of much appreciated **Sword-billed Hummingbirds**. This is undoubtedly one of Yanacocha's most spectacular resident birds, with an extraordinary bill length of up to 12cm that is almost equal to its total body length! An **Andean Guan** lumbering around in the



trees above distracted us momentarily from the hummer frenzy below. On our foggy return journey Daniel walked up to a **Tawny Antpitta** hopping around on the path ahead of us.

After lunch in the field we drove down the **Old Nono-Mindo Road**, a famous birding venue in its own right. The steep valley sides of the Alambi Valley that flank the road, (that is part of the *Nono-*

Mindo Ecoroute, Ecuador's one and only ecoroute), are cloaked in thick subtropical forest and are dotted with silvery-leaved *cecropia* trees, an indicator species that marks the entry into the *subtropical* zone, (as they do not occur in the higher elevations of the temperate zone). A rushing Andean River, the Alambi, slices through the valley bottom and I kept a close eye for movements among its white waters. On jumping out of the car early on, we chanced upon a **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta** feeding uncharacteristically in the open by the roadside that afforded us all mouth-watering views (see photo). A little further on, and indeed at several points on our Tandayapa-bound journey, we brought the bus to a halt for some sprightly **White-capped Dippers** playfully hopping around the spray-washed boulders mid-river, searching for riparian invertebrates. Another bird that is associated with Andean rivers is the **Slaty-capped Chat-Tyrant**, that turned up at our last river stop, before we descended a little further and trained our 'scope on the far side of the valley for another very special bird indeed. While I got the 'scope ready a rowdy chorus of pig-like squeals and grunts came across the valley to us, and soon after a flash of vivid crimson led us to the first of 8 different male **Andean Cock-of-the-rocks** seen displaying throughout the next twenty minutes when we remained transfixed. We then hotfooted it towards Tandayapa, checking a known area for **Beautiful Jay**, where a pair turned up right on cue (that combined nicely with the pair of **Turquoise Jays** seen along a temperate section of the same road earlier in the afternoon), although a **Gorgeted Sunangel** that was busy feeding on some roadside blossoms just pipped that navy jay to the post, for title of first *endemic* of the trip. We then passed through the quaint village of Tandayapa, and climbed up to

Tandayapa Lodge, our comfortable base for the remainder of the tour, where we quickly grabbed a few last minute hummers before dusk descended on us.

NOVEMBER 30

TANDAYAPA VALLEY *Subtropical forest 1750-2300m/5742-7546ft*

A short drive from our lodge took us up to the upper reaches of the **Tandayapa Valley**, where the cloudforest trees are laden with thick patches of damp moss, and the branches of the trees weigh heavy with the burden of burgundy *bromeliads* that are dotted all over their limbs. Our first stop was for **Tanager Finch**, that once more proved a tricky customer and did not show. So with this frustration, we opted to try another spot for this rare, burnt red *Chocó* brush finch, and got mouthwatering views of a bird singing loudly from the underbrush. Not long after we came across another special *Chocó* species, northwest Ecuador's flagship bird, the fabulous **Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan**, so called as it possesses two canary yellow plates attached on either side of its multicolored bill. One smart bird. A short time after trying to comprehend these remarkable birds we bumped into a flock that held both **Streaked Tuftedcheek** and a **Strong-billed Woodcreeper** too. A scarce find up there too was a **Black-capped Tyrannulet** in the roadside cloud forest, as were several **Red-crested Cotingas**, the latter a wanderer from higher elevations. The same forest also held another striking *cotinga*, the **Green-and-black Fruiteater**, a much more expected species in this area.

Soon after the cloud broke up, and the strong tropical sun broke through-bad news in the Andes-where the birds so often seem to prefer moister conditions. It was not all bad though as the bright, clear skies above produced a flurry of raptor sightings: First a **Hook-billed Kite** glided over, then a magnificent **Black-and-chestnut Eagle** gave us a prolonged flyover, before a **White-rumped Hawk** soared above, and finally a **Barred Hawk** drifted over, drawing attention to itself with its loud, far carrying calls. Activity then began to slow a little, but not before we caught up with a superb pair of **Toucan Barbets**, another colorful, high quality regional endemic.



Evidence of the slow down in activity (brought about by the increased temperatures), was seen well when a flock almost froze in the trees above, resting up during the heat of the day, that afforded us great looks at a **Flame-faced Tanager** as it lingered for some time in the trees above. We then decided to head back to **Tandayapa Lodge** for some hummer action, while we bided our time for the cloud forest activity to pick up once again later in the afternoon...

The hummer action at **Tandayapa Lodge** was out of this world, with a near record-breaking (we missed by just two!) **21 species** coming in and out over just a few hours there, including some cool *Chocó* specialists, and some of the most dazzling

species in the region: **Booted Racket-tails** buzzed regularly around the feeders, **Violet-tailed Sylphs** with their impossibly long, metallic purple tails were hard to miss too, **Brown Incas** shot in and out regularly, tiny green hummingbirds-**Western Emeralds**-were also out in numbers, along with a lone **Gorgeted Sunangel** (see photo on previous page), a single snouty male **Empress Brilliant**, the flashy **Purple-bibbed Whitetip**, and many others. However, the real surprise was finding an adult male **Little Woodstar** perched by the feeders, that stopped just short of coming in to the feeders themselves (perhaps intimidated by the hive of activity around the feeders already). This species is globally threatened, listed by IUCN as *endangered*. In between this intense, non-stop, hummingbird action we managed to rip ourselves away from the feeders long enough to find **Red-headed Barbets** around the lodge grounds, and a fine male **Golden-headed Quetzal** from the *lower deck*, an area that looks over the rainforest trees, and a **Crimson-rumped Toucanet** lurking in the same area too.

After this intense hummingbird activity, we decided to return to the **Upper Tandayapa Valley**, hoping that activity may have picked up if the usual overcast afternoon weather had moved in. One roadside flock held a **Rufous-winged**



Tyrannulet, for Remy at least, and another held a burnt orange **Rufous-chested Tanager**, and several **White-winged Brush-finches**. Daniel picked out a fine **Powerful Woodpecker** from the bus, although after jumping off we soon realized that in fact three individuals of this large striking woodpecker species were in the area. A little further along the same road a **Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant** (with the most minimalist of yellow bellies) was extraordinarily confiding (see photo).

Very late in the afternoon a call in the lower Tandayapa Valley brought us onto a **White-throated Spadebill** in the very last glimmers of daylight, that we even managed to spotlight. This exciting record is a new species for the much-birded Tandayapa Valley.

DECEMBER 1

MILPE Foothill forest 1100m/3609ft

This day saw us make our first foray into the *foothills* at **Milpe**, a good 600-1000m/1970-3280ft *lower* than we had been over the last few days. With this substantial drop in our elevation almost all of the birds were different, so that we experienced a thrilling day adding many species to our trip list. In many ways it was a strange day, because we were dogged with some low, thick cloud interspersed with heavy downpours, implying that we should have experienced a poor day for numbers

of bird species. However, by the end of the day we had still managed to notch up well over 100 species in spite of all this.

Our day began checking a hawk perched by the roadside that turned out to be the decidedly scarce **Tiny Hawk**. After checking out this miniature hawk for a while, we visited the Milpe Bird Sanctuary (see www.mindocloudforest.org/), a small **Mindo Cloudforest Foundation** reserve in the foothills just outside the bustling town of Los Bancos. With heavy cloud hanging overhead we descended down the short trail into the forest, to check for some of the special Chocó birds that this sanctuary is home to. Just as we entered under the shade of the overhanging rainforest trees we found one of these staring down at us from above: a pair of **Chocó (White-eyed) Trogons** were sitting quietly overhead. We then set about finding the owner of the

strange mechanical *buzzing* sound emanating from the understory, another regional endemic, and the one that this sanctuary is most famed for: **Club-winged Manakin (see photo)**. This chestnut manakin makes this strange electronic-sounding noise by rubbing its black-and-white wings together at high speed. Just a few weeks back these birds had been silent and were as hard to find as the scarlet pimpernel, so I was relieved to hear they were back. However, hearing them was only half the battle, as on this day they had chosen to display from a little ways



off the trail, leading us to scramble a little off track to catch sight of them, which we eventually *all* did. We then hung about the same area to try and home in on one of the diverse foothill flocks that roam the area. Not long after we were in the midst of a large flock passing through the undergrowth, and seething through the trees overhead. Top prize within was probably the pair of **Rufous-throated Tanagers**, a vastly underrated *Chocó* tanager, in amongst a bunch of other more widespread species, like **Scaly-throated and Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaners, Spotted and Wedge-billed Woodcreepers, Slate-colored Grosbeak, Tawny-breasted Flycatcher**, and even a **Brown-billed Scythebill** was found hiding out in the same flock when it passed by later that morning. Fruiting trees in this area also attracted a gorgeous jet-black male **Golden-winged Manakin** that possesses canary yellow flashes in the wings and a bright golden yellow cap, with a strange horn-like shape to the top of the head. The same area also held what turned out to be the **BIRD OF THE TRIP**, a brutish **Rufous Motmot** sitting quietly in the low rainforest canopy.

As the cloud sank lower overhead and began to drop its heavy load upon us we retreated back to the reserve HQ, that provides a welcome shelter, and comes equipped with some of the best hummingbird feeders in the area. 9 species of hummingbirds zoomed in and out of the feeders, which we watched from the shelter of the café on site. These included some new ones for us, like the violet-bellied,

emerald green-hooded male **Green-crowned Woodnymphs**, and the striking **White-whiskered Hermit**, a *Chocó* species that is more usually found within the gloomy understorey of the forest, but regularly ventures out of there to visit the sanctuary feeders. Also new were **Green Thorntails**, a miniature hummer, that was easily the smallest of the visiting hummingbirds. In addition to them we also had further **Purple-bibbed Whitetips**, (that we had already observed at length at *Tandayapa Lodge*), **White-necked Jacobins**, **Green-crowned Brilliants**, and **Andean Emeralds**. Soon enough lunch came around and we enjoyed a lunch in the



field, stranded under the shelter provided by the café with the onset of heavy rains outside. However, this was not all bad as a number of bananas scattered liberally around the forest edge at some designated feeders provided us with ample entertainment, as many birds came in and out to feed on the bounty.

These included electric-blue hooded **Blue-necked Tanagers** (why did they not call it *Blue-headed/hooded??!!*); **Silver-throated, White-lined, Palm (see photo above), and Flame-rumped Tanagers**, in addition to both **Orange-bellied and Thick-billed Euphonias**, and even an **Orange-billed Sparrow**. During a respite from the rain we walked along the forest edge behind the café and noted a beastly *tarantula* on the café wall, and both **Ruddy Pigeon** and the endemic **Pallid Dove** perched in the trees alongside.

With the rain abating mid-afternoon we decided to make a break for it and check out a small neighboring private reserve, **Milpe Gardens** for more rainforest birds. On the edge of the forest (and indeed the car park) we quickly ran into another feeding flock and set about finding what lay within. A **Spotted Barbtail** trilled from the undergrowth and showed a number of times, a pair of **White-whiskered Puffbirds** showed overhead, and more *foliage-gleaners* and *woodcreepers* also attended too. Daniel also found a **Rufous-rumped Antwren** hiding out in this fast-paced flock. We were just packing up to leave this small reserve when another visiting birder took us over to a fruiting tree where we were soon lined up on a **Gray-and-gold Tanager** perched up in the gloom.

For our final finale we opted to drive the **Milpe road** in the late afternoon checking especially for *parrots* and *toucans*, which often emerge on to the tops of trees at this time of day. This day was no exception and we encountered all three of the hoped-for toucans: the endemic **Chocó Toucan** and **Chestnut-mandibled Toucan**, as well several "target-chested" **Pale-mandibled Aracaris** too, bringing our toucan tally for the day to *four species*. Parrots also showed up, with both **Bronze-winged Parrots** and **Maroon-tailed Parakeets** being found perched along the roadside, the latter by a hollow dead tree, where their nest was located. A male **Olive-crowned**

Yellowthroat was also tempted up onto the tops of the low grass stems with a little help of playback, before we had to hit the road and head back to **Tandayapa Lodge** once more.

DECEMBER 2

MASHPI FOREST *Foothill forest 1300m/4265ft*

Another day and another area of *foothill* forest, although this one markedly different in extent and nature from Milpe, visited the day before. This "new" site, **Mashpi Forest** (it has been there for years of course, although has only fairly recently hit the birding headlines), comprises an area of extensive *foothill* forest, and with it a great chance at some scarce and spectacular *Chocó* species. I simply could not resist shuffling the itinerary in order to squeeze this exciting venue in. A wide road cuts through a range of elevations and forest types on the way to the main section, passing through *subtropical* forest, before descending into the *foothills*. On one of the higher sections a couple of stout doves caught in the middle of the road turned out to be a pair of **White-throated Quail-Doves**. The choice to come here and switch around the itinerary a little, was pretty much justified before we had even



reached our main destination, as we had already by then picked up a **Moss-backed Tanager** sitting quietly on a roadside snag, staring down at us ogling it below. This is a scarce and localized species in the *Chocó* region that was formerly common along the Milpe Road, although has become inexplicably rare in recent years, where there had been no known recent sightings. Therefore, I was pretty pleased to pick this one up en-route to our main site. Also along this

deserted forest road was a **Plain-breasted Hawk**, perched up in a roadside tree—a recently lumped species with **Sharp-shinned Hawk**. Better still was our first **Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager** of the morning, in an area that also brought us a **Fawn-breasted Tanager**, sporting a dove-blue hood and handsome "highwayman's" mask. The tanagers were racking up nicely at this point, although little did we realize quite what a remarkable total this would lead to, and we were not finished with the tanagers just yet for this fine morning either. We then reached the "main area" where I had been a few weeks before and would be where we would focus our search for some of the scarcer species. We intended to start straight off with one of the rarest birds of the tour, and another *Chocó* specialty: *Indigo Flowerpiercer*. However, before we got to work on that one, the distinctive calls of a close **Esmeraldas Antbird** made us change direction and focus, and this furtive bird twice leapt up onto an open branch, giving a few of us anyway some great looks.

Having received a recent tip off of the *flowerpiercers* presence in the area just a few days previously we walked to the area, played a little tape, and were immediately greeted with the sight of two deep blue birds flying into the low scrub next to us. A few minutes later and one of these cobalt birds popped up in a low shrub, where we could see the deep uniform blue plumage and burgundy eye to good effect, a fine **Indigo Flowerpiercer (see bad photo on last lage)**, a rare and very local regional endemic before we had even got into our stride! Not long after we opted to check an area I had recently bumped into another rare species, *Black Solitaire*. Before we could focus on that though a couple of close calling Orange-breasted Fruiteaters were worth more than a look so we set about trying to locate one of these calling birds, only to hear a Black Solitaire calling before we had even glimpsed one of the continually calling fruiteaters! Which to look for first, a nice dilemma for a guide? We "tood-and-froed" for a while, trying to locate the solitaire, then quickly switching our attentions to the fruiteater, but came up empty-handed on both for a time. At this point I was losing my patience (and maybe my mind too), before the **Black Solitaire** nipped up several times giving those who were fast on the draw some choice views of this sharp-dressed thrush. It never remained quite long enough for all, being elusive and shy the whole time, but at least three people got some choice looks before we turned our attentions again to the fruiteater, another cool *Chocó* species. Not long later, after getting far from satisfactory glimpses of an all green female, another movement caught our eyes and we were soon onto a black-

hooded, emerald-backed, and fiery orange-chested *male* fruiteater. For a time we had been shadowed along the road by a couple of young local children, not used to seeing crowds of "gringos" staring up at the trees near their farm. So once all had got an eyeful of the male **Orange-breasted Fruiteater (see photo)**, I decided to lower the scope and give them a shot too at this breathtaking cotinga. My



reasoning was simple: if this bird does not get you to appreciate birds, nothing will!! The girl looked pleased when she moved away from the scope to let her smaller brother in, although it soon became apparent that her brother was missing the bird within. So I lowered the scope further still and her brother moved in once more, and almost immediately shouted "*que bonita, que bonita*", and began jumping about, quite theatrically, in celebration. Hopefully this was a good sign for furthering a future interest in birds for him that may be encouraged by more birding visitors this exciting spot in the near future! As the sun's heat was becoming intense in this open

area, we waved to the kids and headed under the shade of the rainforests trees, on the lookout particularly for flocks that could hold some further *Chocó* specialties for us. We did not have long to wait for our first signs of a flock, and a rusty bird that flew across the road soon had me reaching for my I-pod, which quickly brought the **Pacific (Buffy) Tuftedcheek** straight back into the tree overhead. Not long after some high-pitched calls in the canopy had us looking skyward for signs of any bright emerald-green birds in the trees above, as the calls were coming from a small group of **Glistening-green Tanagers**, another rare and beautiful *Chocó* tanager, that is all bright green, except for a slight “blemish” of scarlet on the ears. With a little playback the birds were soon in the trees overhead, and these hyperactive green “bullets” shot from one tree to the next as we soaked up their gem-like plumage. On the way back to the vehicle near the end of the morning we bumped into another flock that held more “*glisteners*”, further **Black-chinned Mountain-Tanagers**, and more beguiling **Toucan Barbets**, (the latter of which we had seen a number of times through the morning). Remy also was granted the final look at the **Black Solitaire** that once again popped up for just a brief, heart-stopping moment. On the way back to the Tandayapa a **White-throated Crake** scurried across the road in front of the bus, and a bright ginger **Pacific Hornero** was watched strutting about, just off the side of the road.

Late afternoon saw us back in the *subtropics*, along a new section of the **Old Nono-Mindo Road** for us, and produced another endemic, that was far less appreciated than some of the other more flashy ones on that day: the well-named **Dusky Bush-Tanager**. A male **Golden-headed Quetzal** was observed for much more time - the bright viridian upperparts, and vivid vermilion underparts being understandably far more appealing than the dowdy, ashen plumage of the bush-tanager!

DECEMBER 3

RIO SILANCHE *Lowland forest 350m/1148ft*

For our penultimate day we ventured further west than we had previously been, and also lower than we had been up until then on the tour, checking out remnant patches of lowland *Chocó* forest just to the west of the town of **Pedro Vicente Maldonado**. It was a long day as we needed to travel some 70km westwards. However, when we looked back on the day, where we had recorded *over 140 species* for this day alone, some new *endemics* for the trip, along with a bunch of other additions for the tour, it was well, well worth the journey. Immediately after stepping out of the car the rise in temperatures, with a dash of humidity, reminded us swiftly we were now in the *lowlands*. First we birded the patches of trees and open country on the 7km section of dirt road leading into the **Rio Silanche** reserve, and then we birded in the forest within the sanctuary itself, and even spent a bit of time on their centerpiece structure: a 50ft high canopy observation tower.

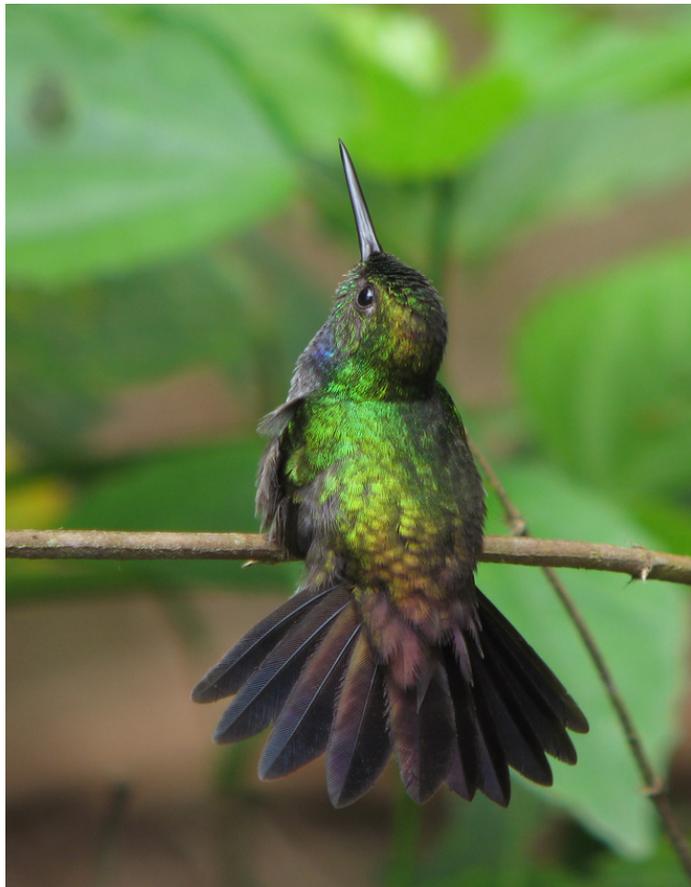
I warned everyone early that we would try our best to get to the sanctuary early, although as the open country along the road is always quite “birdy” we may get distracted a number of times en-route. Some vibrant red flowers near the start of the road brought in an equally vibrant hummingbird, the emerald-green-and-snow-white **Purple-crowned Fairy**. Parrots were well represented on the day too, with both **Mealy and Red-lored Amazons** passing noisily overhead en-route to the sanctuary. Our arrival at the reserve was inevitably delayed as many new birds for us were found along the road, so that we spent the first few hours of the morning

hopping in and out of the car at regular intervals, for a pair of **Barred Puffbirds**, **Pacific Antwren**, **Little Cuckoo**, a pair of **Scarlet-backed Woodpeckers**, an “oh so cute” huddle of **Pacific Parrotlets** (a tiny, tiny parrot), a gaudy **Yellow-tailed Oriole**, a vociferous **Bright-rumped Attila**, and many, many others.

Once we reached the reserve itself we headed in earnest for the tower, (where the endemic **Purple-chested Hummingbird-see photo below**-regularly defended purple flowers around the base), in the hope that we could pick out some canopy birds moving through the trees in the area, before the inevitable midday lull in bird activity hit. Once we got to the top of the tower we were greeted with a strange sight: a row of empty coffee cups and no sign of anybody. Like a scene from the *Mary Celeste* it appeared like people had left in a hurry. Immediately it raced through my mind, what had caused these birders to leave in such a hurry, what birds were we missing down below???! In spite of these paranoid thoughts we stuck to our guns and remained on the tower, which turned out to be just the right move, as it was more than a little “birdy” up there too. Someone noticed a chunky blackish tanager preening inconspicuously in the treetops that sported a bright red *supercilium*, and was one of our *Chocó* targets for the day:

Scarlet-browed Tanager.

Then a movement to our right led us to a bright green female *dacnis*, that we were all desperately trying to get good views of when a blue-hooded male **Scarlet-thighed Dacnis** appeared dramatically beside her, and the relatively plain female was soon forgotten. Not long after a **Blue-whiskered Tanager**, a scarce regional endemic appeared suddenly in the trees alongside, although left just as suddenly, only giving just a few of us a glance before it left. A massive black and white woodpecker with a bright scarlet head then overflew the tower, a **Guayaquil Woodpecker**, which (with a little playback) was bought right back into the tree beside us, at eye level from the tower. Some movements in amongst a bunch of bright green fruits also led us to a pair of



Orange-crowned Euphonias taking advantage of the harvest. Scanning distant trees for signs of a flock bought us a male **Chocó Trogon** to add to the pair of these endemic trogons we had seen a few days earlier in the *foothills* at Milpe. This was to be our first of three trogon species encountered in Rio Silanche that day. Another less dramatic endemic, **Dusky Pigeon**, was also taped in from the tower too. Through the day we returned to the tower a number of times hoping to encounter more canopy species passing by. On one occasion we picked up another dazzling

dacnis, with a breathtaking male **Yellow-tufted Dacnis**, a **Plumbeous Kite** also glided low over the tower on another occasion, while a calling **Cinnamon Woodpecker**, one of the striking *celeus* woodpeckers, (that frankly do not have a bad one among them), shot in and landed right next to the tower, much in the manner that the *Guayaquil* had done just hours before. Around the same time in our final, late afternoon visit a scarce parrot, also passed by the tower, as a troop of **Red-masked Parakeets** flew by calling, a *Tumbesian* species, more typical of humid lowlands further south.

On the trails, and on the ground, we searched for and found several flocks, one of which held a tricky-to-spot **Griscom's Antwren** typically hiding out in the subcanopy, others held several **Gray-and-gold Tanagers**, and a **Streak-headed Woodcreeper** was found in another. One trail alone held a male **Western White-tailed Trogon**, male **Collared Trogon**, and a brilliant **Broad-billed Motmot**. A little further along the same forest track a **Band-tailed Barbthroat** was seen feeding on a bright red *heliconia* bract. By the parking lot the understory held a tail-



pumping **Buff-rumped Warbler**, and a small flock of antwrens that held a couple of **Checker-throated Antwrens** among them. Crackling and snapping **White-bearded Manakins** were heard at a number of spots along the trails, although it was back near the bus where we finally got cracking views of a spanking pied male (**see photo**). At one point along the trail we walked into an army antswarm that while not attracting the impressive variety of species that would happen in the eastern lowlands of the Amazon, still managed to pull in a **Plain-brown Woodcreeper**, and best of all, a stunning **Barred Forest-falcon**. Our last flock of the afternoon *still*

held new birds for many of us, like a pair of **Yellow-margined Flatbills**, a **Black-and-white Becard**, a furtive **Ochre-bellied Flycatcher**, and another fine male **Guira Tanager**. A last final addition before we finally left the lowland forest behind was a **Tawny-faced Gnatwren** chattering in the forest understory.

Over a hundred species seen were seen for the day, including **three species of trogon**, **six parrot species**, and a remarkable **eight species of woodpecker**, a lone **Lineated Woodpecker** being our eighth and final one as we tried to make our final exit.

DECEMBER 4

REFUGIO PAZ DE LAS AVES *Subtropical forest 1900m/6234ft*

CALACALI *Dry semi-arid scrub within the inter-Andean valley 2800m/9186ft*

With all that we'd had so far you'd think we would have been struggling to top it all on our final day. However, we visited a very special site for our finale, and enjoyed a fantastic morning there that provided the perfect finish to what had been an exceptional *Introtour*. We spent the morning at **Paz de las Aves**, a small private reserve run by Angel Paz and his brother Rodrigo, where over the past four years they have managed to habituate four species of antpitta, and a number of different



individuals of many of them. Despite remarkable success habituating these birds there are still no guarantees of success when visiting there, and one day can be very different from the next. However, recent visits here had been highly successful and secretly I had high hopes for our visit. Right near the start of the trail, as we began to descend down into the thickly forested valley, we came upon our first antpitta, a **Moustached Antpitta** bounding along the trail in front of us. However, all too soon, it loped off into the dark understorey, and was gone. Rodrigo, (our guide), however was not troubled by this, and led us to a grove of fruiting trees for other species before we focused on the antpittas a little later on. Four trees were laden with small green fruits and we waited patiently to see what would come in to feed on them. Not long after arriving we found our first *frugivorous* species hiding

within, with several **Crimson-rumped Toucanets**, that were later joined by up to four **Golden-headed Quetzals**, two or more **Toucan Barbets**, a single elusive **Olivaceous Piha** that nipped in and out quietly, several female **Andean Cock-of-the-rocks**, and a magnificent male **Scaled Fruiteater**!

Yellow-breasted Antpitta. However, while we waited for that lemon-breasted species we were approached by a confiding **Moustached Antpitta (see photo on next page)**, a different individual to the one seen in the gloom earlier, that hopped down the trail and fed in the open right in front of a very appreciative crowd of onlookers. Meanwhile, Angel and his brother spent a considerable amount of time trying to find the **Yellow-breasted Antpitta (see bottom photo on next page)**, that on this occasion after a painstaking hour+ long wait finally arrived with some fanfare, and then proceeded to hop around on an open rock and take worms just a few meters away from us, much to belated relief of all. While we were waiting for this "royal"

entrance, we did however pick up an excellent **Olivaceous Piha** that showed to all, unlike the one in the fruiting tree earlier had done. Then we went off in search of the *fourth* and final antpitta possibility on site, and this one markedly different from the large *grallaria* species we had experienced so far. Our final species, **Ochre-breasted Antpitta**, is a much smaller species that is within the *grallaricula* genus of antpittas. With the amount of time spent getting to grips with the Yellow-breasted, I feared we had blown our chance of this tiny antpitta, and while I pondered this a tanager flock came through with our final tanager species of the trip, **Metallic-green Tanager**, that we later realized was our 50th tanager species of the tour in six days. Just after I was quickly proved wrong about the **Ochre-breasted Antpitta**, as it soon responded, and we looked down into a narrow forest gully where it hopped in and out to feed on the worms that had been scattered in the forest understorey for it. This brought our antpitta tally to *seven* species on this 6-day trip, with *four* species (and *seven* individuals) being seen during this one crazy morning alone!



We then headed back up the trail in the direction of the café where Angel's wife was busy preparing a brunch of tasty local food. However, we made a prolonged stop at the forest edge where the feeders were attracting some of the coolest hummers in the region, including **Velvet-purple Coronets** (see photo on next page), **Empress Brilliants**, **Violet-tailed Sylphs**, and **Brown Incas**. After watching this final flurry of hummers for the trip we picked up another striking male **Orange-breasted Fruiteater** sitting quietly in a huge, moss-laden tree close to the refuge café.

After a substantial breakfast/early lunch we had a final short session of birding on a near road, where the fragmented patches of subtropical forest brought

us our final and eleventh woodpecker of the trip, a red-capped male **Smoky-brown Woodpecker**. Also in a flock along there were **Mountain Wren**, a group of **Sepia-brown Wrens**, and a lone **Streak-capped Treehunter**, the latter two both new species for the trip.



Even after this flurry during our final morning the area still had more to offer, and we lunched at a set of feeders where just one species of hummingbird came in. However, this was all we needed, as that one species, **White-tailed Hillstar**, was exactly why we had decided to lunch there. After a half hour period, watching this large hummingbird flit in and out four or five times, we continued our journey back in the direction of Quito.

We made one final stop though once we had dropped into the drier inter-Andean valley that Ecuador's capital lies within. The scenery, habitat, and birds were markedly different from the forest species experienced previously on the tour. The slopes of the hill were covered in low, spiny scrub more typical of desert regions, than the forested Andean slopes we had become accustomed too by then. We were principally here for one rare and declining *flycatcher*, that occurs very locally throughout its global range, although luckily the very best Ecuadorian site was just off the side of the road on the way back to Quito, close to the equatorial town of **Calacali**. On arriving at the site an extensive burn had decimated much of the low scrub and for a while we wondered if that would make finding the flycatcher more challenging, although after not too long we found two **White-tailed Shrike-Tyrants** as hoped. Also on site were **Band-tailed Seedeater**, **Ash-breasted Sierra-finch**, **Golden-rumped Euphonias**, and a very showy **Spot-billed Ground-Tyrant**, that was feeding completely in the open in a recently burnt patch. We also added our final **hummer**, the dramatic, long-tailed **Black-tailed Trainbearer** that zoomed in and out of the shrubbery. With that we made our way back to Quito, passing the famous *Mitad del Mundo*, or Equator Monument, indicating that we were crossing over "the middle of the World" once more.

Over our final farewell dinner we reflected on an exceptional six days birding, where we had seen **7 species of Antpitta** (including 4 in one day near Mindo); **11 species of woodpecker** (including 8 in one day at Silanche), **almost 40 species of hummingbird**; an incredible **50 species of Tanager**; and a **final tally of 320 bird species seen** by the end. This included something for everyone, a good range of families to experience for the newcomer to the tropics, and plenty of regional specialties for the more experienced birders in the group, with some **40 Chocó endemics** that brings so many birders to this exciting birding region, time and again. Many of these *Chocó* species are not only appealing for being rare or localized but are also fine-looking birds, like **Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Toucan Barbet, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Glistening-green Tanager, Moss-backed Tanager, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager, Chocó Trogon, Indigo Flowerpiercer**, and **Beautiful Jay**. Interestingly though, *NONE* of these stunning, or rare (e.g. Indigo Flowerpiercer), regional specialties even made the top ten when it came to voting for the top birds of the trip, and illustrates starkly how difficult and challenging it is to pick winners in terms of birds in this region that is loaded with colorful and beautiful species. A final list of sixteen birds came out of the first round of voting that unsurprisingly comprised of a few hummers, and many others: **Velvet-purple Coronet, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Booted Racket-tail, Violet-tailed Sylphs**, and **Giant, Moustached, Yellow-breasted, and Ochre-breasted Antpittas; Golden-headed Quetzal, Rufous Motmot, Pale-mandibled (Collared) Aracari, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, White-bearded Manakin, Turquoise Jay, Black Solitaire, and Yellow-tufted (Black-faced) Dacnis**. In the end after a not so rigorous, and far from independently adjudicated, further round of voting, we all whittled this down to just three birds. Although perhaps this is a little unfair, on such a trip like this, which is packed with the bold, the beautiful, and the rare.

The final top three birds were:

NUMBER 1: Rufous Motmot (Milpe Bird Sanctuary, day 3)

NUMBER 2: Sword-billed Hummingbird (Yanacocha, day 1)

NUMBER 3: Booted Racket-tail (Tandayapa Lodge, day 2)

BIRD 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.

Species highlighted in **RED** are **CHOCÓ ENDEMIC**

Species highlighted in **BLUE** are **TUMBESIAN LOWLAND ENDEMIC**

(As listed in Ridgely, R. S. and Greenfield, P. J. **The Birds of Ecuador. Volume I: Status, Distribution, and Taxonomy**. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York).

Please note: Recent taxonomic changes (published by Cornell in December 2008) render some that were lumped on the Clements list part of a more widespread species, and so are not always considered as endemics, although are listed here for completeness as some authors still believe them to be separate species, and therefore still regarded as endemic.

MCF is an abbreviation of the [Mindó Cloudforest Foundation](http://www.mindocloudforest.org/) <http://www.mindocloudforest.org/>, an Ecuadorian NGO.

JCF is an abbreviation for the [Jocotoco Conservation Foundation](http://www.fjocotoco.org/) <http://www.fjocotoco.org/> another Ecuadorian NGO.

TINAMOUS

H Little Tinamou

Heard regularly in the lowlands at Río Silanche.

TINAMIDAE

Crypturellus soui

GUANS, CHACHALACAS, CURASSOWS

Andean Guan

One of these hefty arboreal birds was seen lumbering about in the trees above the feeders at the JCF Yanacocha reserve.

H Wattled Guan

Heard on several occasions at Tandayapa Lodge, calling distantly in the darkness.

CRACIDAE

Penelope montagnii

Aburria aburri

NEW WORLD QUAIL

Dark-backed Wood-Quail

Proving that birds often turn up at the most inopportune moments, one of these scarce and elusive quails scrambled across the road while I was making a pit stop, in Mashpi Forest. Most of the group saw it before it quickly disappeared into the forest undergrowth once more.

ODONTOPHORIDAE

Odontophorus melanonotus

HERONS, EGRETS, AND BITTERN

Great Egret

One flew over the sanctuary at Milpe.

Cattle Egret

A few flocks were seen in the foothills and lowlands.

ARDEIDAE

Ardea alba

Bubulcus ibis

NEW WORLD VULTURES

Black Vulture

Recorded on all but the first day, where we were at higher elevations than they normally occur. Seen from the subtropics down into the lowlands.

Turkey Vulture

Seen on five out of six days, from the subtropics down into the lowlands.

HAWKS EAGLES AND KITES

Hook-billed Kite

*In an amazing period for raptors in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, we watched one of these soaring on a thermal overhead, that was followed soon after by a **Black-and-chestnut Eagle** cruising low overhead, a vociferous **Barred Hawk** continually calling as it passed by, and a **White-rumped Hawk** also circled above too.*

Plumbeous Kite

One glided low over the canopy tower at Rio Silanche.

Tiny Hawk

Excellent views of a perched bird were had early in the morning along the Milpe Road.

H **Plumbeous Hawk**

A bird was heard calling loudly from a distant patch of forest along the Milpe Road.

Barred Hawk

One flew low overhead, calling continually in the Tandayapa Valley. Another was seen, both in flight and perched, at Mashpi Forest too.

Roadside Hawk

Seen on five out of six days, at a number of varied sites.

Broad-winged Hawk

One of these boreal migrants was found along the road into Mashpi.

White-rumped Hawk

*One soared overhead in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, in a great spell for raptors that also brought us a **Black-and-chestnut Eagle**, **Hook-billed Kite**, and **Barred Hawk** too.*

Black-and-chestnut Eagle

One of these majestic raptors gave us a prolonged look as it circled above us, on a sunny morning in the Tandayapa Valley.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS

H **Laughing Falcon**

Heard calling several times at Rio Silanche.

Barred Forest-Falcon

A shock find at Rio Silanche, where one of these striking raptors was attending an army antswarm, along with a Plain-brown Woodcreeper. Thankfully we got great looks at the multi-barred tail (as it was sitting low in the under storey), allowing us to ID it to species, as the Plumbeous Forest-falcon is also possible in this lowland area.

American Kestrel

One was seen at Calacali, just outside Ecuador's capital, Quito, on our final day.

Bat Falcon

GO *A distant perched bird was seen by the leader only at Rio Silanche.*

CATHARTIDAE

Coragyps atratus

Cathartes aura

ACCIPITRIDAE

Chondrohierax uncinatus

Ictinia plumbea

Accipiter superciliosus

Leucopternis plumbeus

Leucopternis princeps

Buteo magnirostris

Buteo platypterus

Buteo leucorrhous

Spizaetus isidori

FALCONIDAE

Herpetotheres cachinnans

Micrastur ruficollis

Falco sparverius

Falco ruficularis

RAILS, GALLINULES, AND COOTS

White-throated Crake

One scampered across the road on our way out of Mashpi.

PIGEONS AND DOVES

Rock Pigeon

Scattered sightings were made in urban areas.

Band-tailed Pigeon

Recorded along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, and also in the Tandayapa Valley.

Plumbeous Pigeon

Two were seen perched in the middle of the road in the Tandayapa Valley.

Ruddy Pigeon

One was seen by the "café" in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and another was seen at Rio Silanche.

Dusky Pigeon

One was taped into the tree next to us from the canopy tower at Rio Silanche.

Eared Dove

One was seen perched by the road as we ascended Volcan Pichincha on the way to Yanacocha on our first day, with others seen around Quito on our final day too. This is one of the more common species within the city of Quito, even in heavily built-up areas.

Common Ground-Dove

A couple of very brief flybys were seen at Calacali, just outside Quito, on our final day.

White-tipped Dove

A couple were flushed up from roads in the Tandayapa Valley.

Pallid Dove

One bird was seen well, perched in trees near the reserve café in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and another was seen at Rio Silanche too.

White-throated Quail-Dove

Neal and Rob picked up one of these furtive doves from the Tandayapa Lodge blind, and we all saw two on the road on the way into Mashpi.

PARROTS

Maroon-tailed Parakeet

A pair were seen at a nest along the Milpe Road, and others were seen flying by at both Mashpi and Rio Silanche.

Red-masked Parakeet

Four of these parrots flew by the tower at Rio Silanche, which is at the northern extremity of its range, that is centered around the endemic-rich Tumbesian region a little further south.

Pacific Parrotlet

A small huddle of three or four of these tiny, tiny parrots was seen along the road into Rio Silanche.

Blue-headed Parrot

One was heard along the road into Rio Silanche.

Red-billed Parrot

Neal and Rob recorded this species in the Tandayapa Valley, and we all saw several groups in the refuge at Paz de las Aves on our last day.

Speckle-faced (White-capped) Parrot

A small group were seen in the Tandayapa Valley.

RALLIDAE

Laterallus albigularis

COLUMBIDAE

Columba livia

Patagioenas fasciata

Patagioenas plumbea

Patagioenas subvinacea

Patagioenas goodsoni

Zenaida auriculata

Columbina passerina

Leptotila verreauxi

Leptotila pallida

Geotrygon frenata

PSITTACIDAE

Pyrrhura melanura pacifica

Aratinga erythrogenys

Forpus coelestis

Pionus menstruus

Pionus sordidus

Pionus tumultuosus seniloides

Bronze-winged Parrot

Pionus chalcopterus

Recorded at Mashpi, Rio Silanche, and best of all along the Milpe Road, where several perched groups were scoped up.

Red-lored Parrot (Amazon)

Amazona autumnalis

Two birds flew over us calling on our way into the MCF Rio Silanche reserve.

Mealy Parrot (Amazon)

Amazona farinosa

Two calling birds flew over the road into the lowland forest reserve of Rio Silanche, on a day where we saw six parrot species.

CUCKOOS

CUCULIDAE

Little Cuckoo

Coccyua minuta

One was seen along the road into Rio Silanche MCF reserve.

Squirrel Cuckoo

Piaya cayana

One or two were seen on every day of the tour, from the subtropics down into lowland areas.

H Striped Cuckoo

Tapera naevia

Heard calling distantly from an oil plantation en-route to the MCF reserve at Rio Silanche.

Smooth-billed Ani

Crotophaga ani

Recorded by roadsides around Milpe, Mashpi, and Rio Silanche.

POTOOS

NYCTIBIIDAE

Common Potoo

Nyctibius griseus

This large nightbird flew off the side of the road early one evening in the Tandayapa Valley, although unfortunately never returned to its perch as hoped.

SWIFTS

APODIDAE

Chestnut-collared Swift

Streptoprocne rutila

Recorded in mixed swift flocks in the Tandayapa Valley, where they were seen along with White-collared Swifts.

White-collared Swift

Streptoprocne zonaris

This common and large swift was recorded on a number of days in the Tandayapa Valley, Paz de las Aves, along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, Rio Silanche, and at Mashpi.

Gray-rumped Swift

Chaetura cinereiventris

A number of these small swifts were seen flying around the tower at Rio Silanche, with a few more also at Milpe.

go White-tipped Swift

Aeronautes montivagus

Just the one bird was seen, by the guide only, as we awaited the arrival of the stubborn Yellow-breasted Antpitta at Paz de las Aves.

Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift

Panyptila cayennensis

One flew over the tower at Rio Silanche.

HUMMINGBIRDS

TROCHILIDAE

Band-tailed Barbthroat

Threnetes ruckeri

One was seen feeding on a red heliconia bract, along a lowland forest trail at Rio Silanche.

White-whiskered Hermit

Phaethornis yaruqui

Recorded at Milpe, where one or two came in to the feeders on a regular basis.

Tawny-bellied Hermit

Phaethornis syrmatorphorus

Just recorded at Paz de las Aves on our final day, where several were seen in the forest, and two birds even came into the hummingbird feeders on the forest edge.

Stripe-throated Hermit

Phaethornis striigularis

Daniel saw one of the tiny hermits at the MCF Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

White-necked Jacobin

Florisuga mellivora

An infrequent visitor usually to the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, where at least two different birds were coming in during a hectic lunch period there that saw us rack up 21 species of hummers! A couple of other birds were also visiting the feeders within the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Brown Violetear

Colibri delphinae

A Tandayapa Lodge regular at the crowded feeders there.

Green Violetear

Colibri thalassinus

Another bird that was within the melee of hummers visiting the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, although at time was outnumbered by its larger relative, the Sparkling Violetear.

Sparkling Violetear

Colibri coruscans

This hummingbird is one of the commonest birds within the city limits of Quito. We saw them in good numbers at the Tandayapa Lodge feeders.

Green Thorntail

Discosura conversii

This tiny hummer was in attendance in good numbers at the Milpe Bird Sanctuary feeders, with up to 8 birds being seen at any given moment. Another one was visiting the purple flowers around the base of the tower at Rio Silanche in the lowlands too.

Western Emerald

Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus

Another very small hummingbird, that literally glistens bright emerald green. Regularly attending the feeders at Tandayapa Lodge while we were there. Most birds seen were all-green males, with just a single female seen during our time there. Males usually seem to outnumber the females substantially there.

Green-crowned Woodnymph

Thalurania fannyi verticeps

One of the most common hummingbirds at the feeders within the MCF Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Andean Emerald

Amazilia franciae

Regularly recorded at the feeders at Tandayapa Lodge, Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and in Refugio Paz de las Aves.

GO Blue-chested Hummingbird

Amazilia amabilis

Just the one brief sighting of a perched bird along the road into Rio Silanche, that did not unfortunately linger long enough for everyone to get off the bus to see it.

Purple-chested Hummingbird

Amazilia rosenbergi

A number of these aggressive Choco hummers were attending the purple flowers at the base of the tower at Rio Silanche, where they were also regularly defending them from all comers, including a Green Thorntail.

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird

Amazilia tzacatl

Many of the hummingbirds in Ecuador are closely tied to forests at certain altitudes, although this species is less fussy than many of the others, being recorded on all days of the tour from the subtropics down into the lowlands.

Speckled Hummingbird

Adelomyia melanogenys

Recorded at subtropical sites on four days of the trip, including during our crazy time at the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, where it is a bird that wanders down the valley from higher up where it is more common.

Fawn-breasted Brilliant

Heliodoxa rubinoides

Commonly recorded at the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, with smaller numbers seen at the feeders at Paz de las Aves too.

Green-crowned Brilliant

Heliodoxa jacula

This birds range is centered in the foothills, although also occasionally turns up at higher altitudes. We came upon at least three different birds coming to the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, where it is an irregular visitor. Greater numbers were seen at the Milpe Bird Sanctuary in the foothills, and other birds were visiting a fruiting tree in the Mashpi area.

Empress Brilliant

Heliodoxa imperatrix

Our first sighting came within the "hummingbird blitz" we experienced at the Tandayapa Lodge feeders during the middle of the day, when we recorded a male of this spectacular species that dropped in and out occasionally. In all 21 species visited the feeders at that time, in just over an hour! Others were also seen coming to the feeders within the antpitta refuge near Mindo.

White-tailed Hillstar

Urochroa bougueri bougueri

A scarce hummer in NW Ecuador, which we made a special stop for en-route to Quito. We waited by a very quiet set of feeders that only attracted this one species the whole time we were there, the bird coming in four times during our short visit.

Buff-tailed Coronet

Boissonneaua flavescens

A common and aggressive hummingbird at the feeders at Tandayapa Lodge, and Paz de las Aves.

Velvet-purple Coronet

Boissonneaua jardini

A truly awe-inspiring, breathtaking hummingbird, that is made all the more special as it is a localized endemic to the region. Daniel had a brief sighting in the Mashpi area, although we all got to savor the species properly at the feeders at Paz de las Aves, after our morning of "antpitta mayhem".

Brown Inca

Coeligena wilsoni

Two or three birds were coming in regularly to the Tandayapa Lodge feeders and others were seen at Mashpi and Paz de las Aves.

Collared Inca

Coeligena torquata

A male came into the Tandayapa Lodge feeders on one day, and others were seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Buff-winged Starfrontlet

Coeligena lutetiae

Just seen during our first morning in the temperate reserve of Yanacocha, where many swarmed one particular set of feeders along the "Inca Trail".

Sword-billed Hummingbird

Ensifera ensifera

Yanacocha's most revered resident hummingbird, by virtue of its incredibly long bill. This species possesses the longest bill of any bird in the world (relative to body size). Two or three individuals were seen regularly coming to the main set of feeders there, with another at a smaller set of feeders along the trail before then. An astounding bird that quite rightly got plenty of attention and recommendations when debating the top birds of the trip during our final dinner. This bird was narrowly beaten to top spot by Rufous Motmot.

Great Sapphirewing

Pterophanes cyanopterus

Another impressive species, due to its size, being one of the world's largest hummingbird species. Three or more males were regularly coming into the Yanacocha feeders on our first day, with the odd female making an appearance too.

Gorgeted Sunangel

Heliangelus strophianus

We picked up our first sunangel along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, en-route to Tandayapa Lodge on our first day, when we watched a bird nectaring in a flowering tree for some time. This constituted the first Choco endemic of the tour, narrowly beating the troop of Beautiful Jays that we found minutes later. Other sunangels were seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, and of course at the Tandayapa Lodge feeders that held the lions share of the hummingbird species seen on the tour.

Sapphire-vented Puffleg

Eriocnemis luciani

This highland hummer was one of the more common species visiting the Yanacocha feeders on our first day.

Golden-breasted Puffleg

Eriocnemis mosquera

As usual outnumbered at the feeders by Sapphire-vented Pufflegs, although three to four birds were also seen at the same feeders, allowing nice side-by-side comparison of these similar species.

Purple-bibbed Whitetip

Urostitte benjamini

Another flashy endemic, that was regularly performing at the Tandayapa Lodge feeders, and a single bird also visited the hummingbird garden at Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Booted Racket-tail

Ocreatus underwoodii

One of the flagship birds of Tandayapa Lodge, where many of these birds were "swarming" the feeders on the hummingbird balcony. A male was also seen in the forest at Mashpi.

NB. Also known as Racket-tailed Puffleg for good reason.

Black-tailed Trainbearer

Lesbia victoriae

A couple zipped over the vehicle at high speed on our way up to Yanacocha on the first day. However, most of us had to wait until the final day to catch up with it, in the dry scrubby terrain of Calacali, nestled right on the equator.

Tyrian Metaltail

Metallura tyrianthina

This tiny highland hummingbird regularly came to the feeders at Yanacocha.

Violet-tailed Sylph

Aglaiocercus coelestis

Another impressive species found in good numbers at Tandayapa Lodge, where many impressive males sporting flashy metallic violet tails checked out the feeders on the hummingbird balcony on a regular basis. Others were also recorded in the forest at Mashpi, and also at Paz de las Aves, the "Antpitta Refuge".

H Wedge-billed Hummingbird

Augastes geoffroyi

One was heard calling from high in the trees at Mashpi, although despite much neck straining I just could not find it.

Purple-crowned Fairy

Heliothryx barroti

This striking "colibri" was one of the very first birds seen on our day in the lowlands, along the entrance track into Rio Silanche.

Purple-throated Woodstar

Calliphlox mitchellii

This tiny hummingbird was common at Tandayapa Lodge, with a few also seen at Paz de las Aves.

White-bellied Woodstar

Chaetocercus mulsant

One bird showed up among the Purple-throated Woodstars at Tandayapa Lodge.

Little Woodstar

Chaetocercus bombus

A shock find was a full, pristine adult male bird that whizzed in and perched just off the hummingbird balcony at Tandayapa Lodge, but fell short of actually coming in to the feeders themselves. A rare visitor to Tandayapa Lodge, and scarce throughout its shrinking global range. The species is listed as VULNERABLE by Birdlife International.

TROGONS

TROGONIDAE

(Western) White-tailed Trogon

Trogon viridis chionurus

A male came in and perched over us, along a trail in the lowland forest of Rio Silanche, allowing us a good view of the clean, all-white undertail.

NB. The South American Checklist Committee has recently accepted a proposal to split the western race, **chionurus**, from the eastern race, **viridis**. Under this proposal-that is likely to be later adopted under the official Clements list, (as Cornell are using the SACC list for the basis of taxonomy adopted in South America)-this western form keeps the name **White-tailed Trogon T. chionurus**, and the Amazonian White-tailed form is renamed as **Green-backed Trogon T. viridis**.

Collared Trogon

Trogon collaris

A male was seen further along the same forest trail as the Western White-tailed Trogon was also seen, at Rio Silanche.

Masked Trogon

Trogon personatus

A rusty-backed female was seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and a green-backed male was seen in Refugio Paz de las Aves on our final morning.

White-eyed (Chocó) Trogon

Trogon comptus

A pair were seen at the forest edge within the MCF Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and a male was also seen in the other MCF reserve, Rio Silanche.

NB. This has also been called **Blue-tailed Trogon** in the past too, and is currently given this name by the South American Checklist Committee..

Golden-headed Quetzal

Pharomachrus auriceps

A male was scoped up from the lower deck at Tandayapa Lodge, and another male was seen along the Old Nono-Mindo Road. However, the most memorable views came on our final morning at Paz de las Aves, where four birds came into a fruiting tree during a frantic period of action when a pair of **Toucan Barbets**, an **Olivaceous Piha**, a male **Scaled Fruiteater**, three female **Andean Cock-of-the-rocks**, and several **Crimson-rumped Toucanets** all came in to take advantage of the bounty of fruits available at the time.

MOTMOTS

MOMOTIDAE

Rufous Motmot

Baryphthengus martii

A bird seen in the Milpe area was voted as **THE BIRD OF THE TRIP**.

Broad-billed Motmot

Electron platyrhynchum

A bird showed well for a prolonged period in the 'scope at Rio Silanche, along the same trail that also produced both male **Collared** and **Western White-tailed Trogons**.

PUFFBIRDS

BUCCONIDAE

Barred Puffbird

Nystalus radiatus

A pair were seen in an area of very patchy forest en-route to Rio Silanche.

White-whiskered Puffbird

Malacoptila panamensis

A pair were found in a small private reserve in the Milpe area.

NEW WORLD BARBETS

CAPITONIDAE

Red-headed Barbet

Eubucco bourcierii

The "resident" pair were found again in the Tandayapa Lodge garden, with others seen at Milpe and Mashpi.

TOUCAN-BARBETS

Toucan Barbet

One of the most striking and colorful of all the Choco endemics. We enjoyed a good time with this species, recording it at three sites: the Tandayapa Valley, Mashpi (where we had several sightings), and also at Paz de Las Aves, where one fruiting tree held a pair of these along with four Golden-headed Quetzals, a male Scaled Fruiteater, an Olivaceous Piha, several Crimson-rumped Toucanets, and a small group of female Andean Cock-of-the-rocks.

TOUCANS

Crimson-rumped Toucanet

Three were seen right around the lodge at Tandayapa, another was seen at Milpe (on a day of 4 toucan species), and at least three were seen in the busy fruiting trees at Paz de las Aves.

Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan

On our second day of the tour we bumped into two groups, the second group of four birds allowing us some magical views as they fed on fruits in the Tandayapa Valley.

Collared (Pale-mandibled) Aracari

Recorded several times at Milpe, where we racked up four species of toucan in our day there. The best bird showed as it fed on fruits near the café in the MCF Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Chestnut-mandibled Toucan

Two birds were found perched up calling in the late afternoon along the Milpe Road.

Chocó Toucan

Several of these "croaking" toucans were perched up by the Milpe Road late in the afternoon.

WOODPECKERS

Olivaceous Piculet

A pair of these piculets was seen along the entrance road into Rio Silanche, and another bird was heard in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Black-cheeked Woodpecker

Encountered several times in the area around Rio Silanche, on a day where we picked up seven new species of woodpecker.

Scarlet-backed Woodpecker

A pair of these dandy woodpeckers was found on our way into Rio Silanche.

Smoky-brown Woodpecker

A male was seen just outside the refuge at Paz de las Aves on our final morning.

Red-rumped Woodpecker

One was found right by the reserve car park at Rio Silanche.

Golden-olive Woodpecker

One turned up in a flock at Milpe, with another a few days later at Rio Silanche, the only one of eight woodpeckers that days that was NOT new for the trip!

Crimson-mantled Woodpecker

For me the best woodpecker in the region. We picked up our first en-route to Tandayapa Lodge, along the Paseo del Quinde on our first day. Another was seen in the back yard of the lodge at Tandayapa the following day. A final sighting was made at Paz de las Aves, while we kept a close eye on a fruiting tree for colorful fruit-eating birds to arrive (which they duly did a short time later).

Cinnamon Woodpecker

Another decent woodpecker, that was seen from the tower within the MCF sanctuary at Rio Silanche.

SEMNORNITHIDAE

Semnornis ramphastinus

RAMPHASTIDAE

Aulacorhynchus haematopygus

Andigena laminirostris

Pteroglossus torquatus erythropygius

Ramphastos swainsonii

Ramphastos brevis

PICIDAE

Picumnus olivaceus

Melanerpes pucherani

Veniliornis callonotus

Veniliornis fumigatus

Veniliornis kirkii

Colaptes rubiginosus

Colaptes rivolii

Celeus loricatus

Lineated Woodpecker

Dryocopus lineatus

Our eighth and final woodpecker of our day in the lowlands. Just after we had left the reserve of Rio Silanche, Daniel brought our bus to a halt for this smart 'pecker. This made a nice species pairing with the **Guayaquil Woodpecker** seen earlier the same day.

Powerful Woodpecker

Campephilus pollens

Another spectacular woodpecker find by Daniel, and once again from the bus too. This time it was a male Powerful from the bus while we descending the Old Nono-Mindo Road. On jumping off the bus we also found another male, and a female, totalling three birds in all in the area.

Guayaquil Woodpecker

Campephilus guayaquilensis

Another flashy woodpecker. A male overflowed the canopy tower at Rio Silanche, that we lured back into the tree next to us for choice looks a short time later.

OVENBIRDS

FURNARIIDAE: FURNARIINAE

Pale-legged (Pacific) Hornero

Furnarius leucopus cinnamomeus

Our first bird was flushed off the road as we left Mashpi, that was then watched at length strutting around someones yard to the side of the main road. Later others were seen along the road in to Rio Silanche.

NB. This is split off as Pacific Hornero in the Birds of Ecuador by Ridgely and Greenfield, although is considered a race of the widespread Pale-legged Hornero in the latest Clements list.

Azara's Spinetail

Synallaxis azarae

One was seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and also briefly at Yanacocha.

Rufous Spinetail

Synallaxis unirufra

One showed up in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Slaty Spinetail

Synallaxis brachyura

Although heard on a number of occasions, only Neal got a look at this one, seeing a bird just outside the refuge at Paz de las Aves.

White-browed Spinetail

Hellmayrea gularis

A pair showed really well along the Inca Trail at Yanacocha.

Red-faced Spinetail

Cranioleuca erythrops

Singles were recorded in the Tandayapa Valley, Milpe, in the Mashpi area, and near Rio Silanche.

Spotted Barbtail

Premnoplex brunnescens

One was seen in an understorey flock within Milpe Gardens reserve, and another was seen for a short time at Mashpi.

Pearled Treerunner

Margarornis squamiger

Unusually very few flocks were encountered in the Tandayapa Valley, and therefore just the two birds were seen: one in Yanacocha, and a single sighting later in the Tandayapa Valley too.

Buffy (Pacific) Tuftedcheek

Pseudocolaptes lawrencii johnsoni

One of these rich rusty ovenbirds was found within a feeding flock in Mashpi Forest. The same flock also held two or three **Glistening-green Tanagers**.

Streaked Tuftedcheek

Pseudocolaptes boissonneautii

Again, as a result of very few flocks being recorded in the Tandayapa Valley, just a single sighting was made in there of this flock-following species.

Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner

Anabacerthia variegaticeps

A few were seen moving through with mixed flocks in the foothills.

H Lineated Foliage-gleaner

Syndactyla subalaris

One was heard calling within Mashpi Forest.

H Striped (Western) Woodhaunter

Hyloctistes subulatus assimilis

One was heard from the forest while we up on the tower at Rio Silanche.

NB. This western “form” is considered a separate species from the eastern “race”, Eastern Woodhaunter, in the Ecuador field guide by Ridgely and Greenfield, although on the latest Clements list is lumped with the eastern form as Striped Woodhaunter.

Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner

Philydor rufum

Several of these foliage-gleaners were seen in the mixed foothill flocks at Milpe.

H Striped Treehunter

Thripadectes holostictus

Heard on one occasion in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Streak-capped Treehunter

Thripadectes virgaticeps

One showed well just outside the refuge at Paz de las Aves on our final morning.

H Ruddy Foliage-gleaner

Automolus rubiginosus

Heard calling in both Milpe and Rio Silanche.

Plain Xenops

Xenops minutus

One or two were recorded coming through with mixed flocks at Milpe, Mashpi, and Rio Silanche.

WOODCREEPERS

FURNARIIDAE: DENDROCOLAPTINAE

Plain-brown Woodcreeper

Dendrocincla fuliginosa

One was attending an army antswarm (which also brought in a Barred Forest-Falcon), in Rio Silanche reserve.

Wedge-billed Woodcreeper

Glyphorhynchus spirurus

Recorded in mixed feeding flocks in Milpe, Mashpi, and Rio Silanche.

Strong-billed Woodcreeper

Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus

One of these chunky woodcreepers showed well in the Tandayapa Valley one morning.

Spotted Woodcreeper

Xiphorhynchus erythropygius

Recorded at both Milpe and Rio Silanche.

Streak-headed Woodcreeper

Lepidocolaptes souleyetii

Two birds were seen within mixed flocks in Rio Silanche.

Montane Woodcreeper

Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger

Recorded at three sites in the trip: the Tandayapa Valley, en-route to Mashpi, and Paz de las Aves.

Brown-billed Scythebill

Campylorhamphus pusillus

One came through in mixed flock within the MCF foothill sanctuary at Milpe.

TYPICAL ANTBIRDS

THAMNOPHILIDAE

H Western Slaty-Antshrike

Thamnophilus atrinucha

Heard several times around Rio Silanche.

H Uniform Antshrike

Thamnophilus unicolor

One was heard in the refuge at Paz de las Aves.

Checker-throated Antwren

Epinecrophylla fulviventris

A small chattering flock of these antwrens was found near parking lot at Rio Silanche.

Moustached (Griscom's) Antwren

Myrmotherula ignota ignota

One came in to tape at Rio Silanche.

Pacific Antwren

Myrmotherula pacifica

Remy saw one of these striking little antbirds en-route to Rio Silanche.

Slaty Antwren

Several came through within mixed feeding flocks in the foothill reserve of Milpe.

Dot-winged Antwren

One was in a mixed understory flock of antbirds at Rio Silanche, that also held several Checker-throated Antwrens.

H Long-tailed Antbird

One was heard calling as we descended the trail at Paz de las Aves, although at the time we were on an antpitta "mission" so that we had to prioritize those special birds at the time!

Rufous-rumped Antwren

Daniel picked up one of these striking canopy antbirds in a mixed flock along the Milpe Road.

Chestnut-backed Antbird

Seen briefly in Milpe, and also heard around Silanche too.

Esmeraldas Antbird

A pair was heard in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Immaculate Antbird

A jet-black male was seen in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Myrmotherula schisticolor

Microrhophias quixensis

Drymophila caudata

Terenura callinota

Myrmeciza exsul

Myrmeciza nigricauda

Myrmeciza immaculata

ANTTHRUSHES

H Rufous-breasted Antthrush

A few distant calling birds were heard at Mashpi.

FORMICARIIDAE

Formicarius rufipectus

ANTPITTAS

H Undulated Antpitta

GRALLARIIDAE

Grallaria squamigera

Several distant calling birds were heard upslope from the trail at Yanacocha on our first morning.

Giant Antpitta

One of the star attractions of any northwest tour is a visit to Paz de las Aves, variously known as the "antpitta refuge", or the "antpitta farm", where a local farmer and his brother have habituated four species of antpitta, and a number of individuals of each. Every visit there is different, and even at this amazing place no sightings of any species are guaranteed, although this place does give a much better chance to catch up with some of these very shy and rare species, including this species, the rarest of them all in "normal" circumstances. We enjoyed a fantastic run on antpittas on this short tour in general, and also at the refuge specifically too, where we bumped into four species and seven different individual antpittas on our final morning there. This included three different Giant Antpittas, that were all stood together at one time, an extraordinary sight indeed.

Moustached Antpitta

During our final antpitta morning at Paz de las Aves we tracked down two different Moustached Antpittas: one in the early morning gloom on the way down the trail at the start of our hike, and then a much more cooperative individual that came and distracted us while we were waiting for the arrival of another rare antpitta, a Yellow-breasted Antpitta.

Grallaria gigantea

Grallaria alleni

Chestnut-crowned Antpitta

Grallaria ruficapilla

Although our final morning (when we racked up seven individual antpittas of four species was THE antpitta day of the tour), our first day was not bad either, when some of us saw three different species. This one was found hopping along the Old Nono-Mindo Road in the middle of the afternoon at a fortuitous moment when we had jumped out of the vehicle for something entirely different. Initially the bird retreated back into the thick roadside bamboo on being discovered by eight birders, although thankfully returned and continued to feed out in the open once more a short time later, affording us superb views of this often shy species.

H Chestnut-naped Antpitta

Grallaria nuchallis

Typically, several were heard calling a long way downslope from the trail at Yanacocha.

Yellow-breasted Antpitta

Grallaria flavotincta

Of the four antpitta species seen during our final morning in Paz de las Aves, this proved the toughest to find. All credit to Angel and his brother who persevered for more than an hour before finally the antpitta relented and came flying across the river, and then fed out in the open while our cameras went into overdrive. We may have had to wait over an hour, although everyone agreed this was well, well worth it.

Rufous Antpitta

Grallaria rufula

A pair of these rusty birds came in extremely well alongside the trail at Yanacocha, affording everyone excellent views of this often shy antpitta.

Tawny Antpitta

Grallaria quitensis

Daniel came upon one of these antpittas hopping around in the middle of the trail in thick fog, late on during our first morning at the Yanacocha reserve.

Ochre-breasted Antpitta

Grallaria flavirostris

Our fourth and final antpitta of our last morning (and our eighth and final antpitta of the tour), at Paz de las Aves, was "Shakira" the Ochre-breasted. Angel named this bird as such after the Colombian pop star, who is known for wiggling her hips. This grallaricula like many others frequently wiggles its body from side to side, and so Angel named it after the pop star as it too seems to wiggle its hips!!!

TAPACULOS

RHINOCRYPTIDAE

H Blackish (Unicolored) Tapaculo

Scytalopus (unicolor) latrans

Heard a number of times around Yanacocha.

H Nariño Tapaculo

Scytalopus vicinior

One was heard calling distantly at Paz de las Aves while we waited for the arrival of various fruit eating birds at Paz de las Aves.

Spillman's Tapaculo

Scytalopus spillmanni

Daniel glimpsed one of these extremely elusive birds in the Tandayapa Valley.

H Ocellated Tapaculo

Acropternis orthonyx

We tried hard for this one at several known spots, and despite one seeming to respond reasonably close at one time, it quickly moved away before it had got close enough to even get a shot at.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

TYRANNIDAE

H Brown-capped Tyrannulet

Ornithion brunneicapillus

One was heard in a lowland forest patch at Rio Silanche.

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet

Camptostoma obsoletum

Neal and Rob picked up one of the tyrannulets near Tandayapa village.

White-tailed Tyrannulet

Mecocerculus poecilocercus

Several were seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and also in the subtropical forest of Paz de las Aves.

White-banded Tyrannulet

Mecocerculus stictopterus

Three or more birds were found in the mixed feeding flocks found along the trail at Yanacochoa.

White-throated Tyrannulet

Mecocerculus leucophrys

A few birds were found at Yanacochoa.

Rufous-winged Tyrannulet

Mecocerculus calopterus

One was seen by Remy in the lower Tandayapa Valley, and there was also another brief sighting within the Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

NB. This species is confined to just northern Peru and western Ecuador, where it appears to undergo seasonal movements.

Tufted Tit-Tyrant

Anairetes parulus

Just the one distant bird was scoped at Calacali, on our final afternoon.

Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet

Tyrannulus elatus

One came through with a mixed flock in an area of secondary growth at Rio Silanche.

Gray Elaenia

Myiopagis caniceps

Daniel found one of these flycatchers within the reserve at Rio Silanche.

Yellow-bellied Elaenia

Elaenia flavogaster

One of these large elaenias was found along the road into Rio Silanche.

Sierran Elaenia

Elaenia pallatangae

A pair were seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and another was seen in Refugio Paz de las Aves.

Streak-necked Flycatcher

Mionectes striaticollis

Seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and in Refugio Paz de las Aves.

Olive-striped Flycatcher

Mionectes olivaceus

One showed to guide only in Rio Silanche.

Ochre-bellied Flycatcher

Mionectes oleagineus

One showed up late in the afternoon at Rio Silanche.

Slaty-capped Flycatcher

Leptopogon superciliaris

Recorded in some of the mixed flocks in the foothills of Milpe.

Sooty-headed Tyrannulet

Phyllomyias griseiceps

One of these vocal flycatchers was seen on our way into Rio Silanche.

Black-capped Tyrannulet

Phyllomyias nigrocapillus

One was seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Chocó (Golden-faced) Tyrannulet

Zimmerius (chrysops) albigularis

This recently recognized species was seen in Milpe and also around Rio Silanche.

*NB. This western form (albigularis) was recently (December 2008), split from Golden-faced Tyrannulet *Z. chrysops*, and is now considered a regional endemic species, confined to northwestern Ecuador and southwestern Colombia.*

Ornate Flycatcher

Myiotriccus ornatus

Seen in Milpe, Paz de las Aves, and also at Rio Silanche.

Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant

Pseudotriccus ruficeps

One was seen during our first search for Tanager Finch, along the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

H Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant

Myiornis atricapillus

Heard a few times in the Rio Silanche reserve, although unfortunately none of them responded.

Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant

Lophotriccus pileatus

One was seen at Milpe, with another seen at Rio Silanche.

Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher

Todirostrum nigriceps

One of these tiny flycatchers was seen perched overhead at Rio Silanche.

Yellow-margined Flycatcher (Flatbill)

Tolmomyias assimilis flavotectus

A pair came through with a mixed flock at Rio Silanche in the late afternoon.

White-throated Spadebill

Platyrinchus mystaceus

While birding the lower Tandayapa Valley late one afternoon I was shocked to hear a spadebill calling, a new species for the valley. As light faded we desperately tried to confirm the record with a view of the bird, although gradually it became darker and darker and our hopes faded. However, just before it was too dark I caught movement of the bird and found it sitting at close range, and having my spotlight to hand spotlighted the bird that thankfully remained in place for all to see.

H Cinnamon Flycatcher

Pyrrhomyias cinnamomeus

A surprise miss, that is usually straightforward to find in mixed flocks in the Tandayapa Valley. However, we had poor luck with flocks in the valley while we were there-hot dry, sunny mornings not helping this.

Tawny-breasted Flycatcher

Myiobius villosus

One came through with a mixed bird party at Milpe in the foothills.

Flavescent Flycatcher

Myiophobus flavicans

One of these flycatchers was seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Bran-colored Flycatcher

Myiophobus fasciatus

One was seen en-route to Rio Silanche.

Smoke-colored Pewee

Contopus fumigatus

Several were seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and another was seen at Paz de las Aves.

Western Wood-Pewee

Contopus sordidulus

These boreal migrants were recorded on three days, at Milpe, Mashpi, and at Rio Silanche.

Acadian Flycatcher

Empidonax virescens

Another boreal migrant, one was seen at Milpe, and another in the lowlands at Silanche.

Black Phoebe

Sayornis nigricans

Recorded in the Tandayapa Valley.

Spot-billed Ground-Tyrant

Muscisaxicola maculirostris

On arriving at Calacali on the outskirts of Quito, we found the whole area to have undergone an extensive burn, with much of the low dry scrub at the start of the trail having been cleared in the burn. However, rather than this be a bad thing it seemed to help us in finding this often difficult species, that on this occasion was feeding right out in the middle of one of the large burnt areas.

White-tailed Shrike-Tyrant

Agriornis albicauda

*Two of these rare and local flycatchers were seen on our final afternoon, just before we arrived back in Quito, in the dry country of Calacali. This species appears to be declining throughout its range for unknown reasons, and is never common anywhere within its range that is from Ecuador south to Chile and Argentina. It is currently listed as **VULNERABLE** by the IUCN/Birdlife International.*

Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant

Myiotheretes striaticollis

One was perched on a wire along the road into the Yanacocha reserve on our first morning.

Masked Water-Tyrant

Fluvicola nengeta

Two of these really smart flycatchers were found along the Milpe Road late in the afternoon.

Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant

Ochthoeca diadema

Two were seen in along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, one of which allowed us to approach unbelievably close.

Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant

Ochthoeca cinnamomeiventris

One of these riparian flycatchers was found alongside the Rio Alambi on our first afternoon as we drove towards Tandayapa Lodge from Yanacocha.

Bright-rumped Attila

Attila spadiceus

This loud, vociferous flycatcher was found calling in a tree by the entrance road into Rio Silanche reserve.

Rufous Mourner

Rhytipterna holerythra

Daniel picked up this scarce mourner in the MCF Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Dusky-capped Flycatcher

Myiarchus tuberculifer

A couple were seen in the foothills at Milpe, and another was seen in the lowlands at Rio Silanche.

Rusty-margined Flycatcher

Myiozetetes cayanensis

Numerous in the lowlands around Silanche.

Social Flycatcher

Myiozetetes similis

At least one was identified in the Lower Tandayapa Valley, with others possibly around Silanche where we had many Rusty-margined/Social Flycatchers, that we simply did not spend time identifying by virtue of being distracted by many other birds!

Golden-crowned Flycatcher

Myiodynastes chrysocephalus

Two were seen in the Tandayapa Valley.

Streaked Flycatcher

Myiodynastes maculatus

One was seen from the canopy tower at MCF Rio Silanche reserve.

Piratic Flycatcher

Legatus leucophaeus

One was scoped from the canopy tower at the Mindo Cloudforest reserve of Rio Silanche.

Snowy-throated Kingbird

Tyrannus niveigularis

This local migrant was seen at Milpe, Silanche, and near Mashpi.

Tropical Kingbird

Tyrannus melancholicus

Recorded from the subtropics down into the lowlands, where it was most common.

COTINGAS

COTINGIDAE

Red-crested Cotinga

Ampelion rubrocristatus

Two of these largely temperate cotingas were found in the subtropical forests of the Upper Tandayapa Valley, where they are an irregular wanderer from higher elevations.

Green-and-black Fruiteater

Pipreola riefferii

Several were seen in the Tandayapa Valley, including a smart black-hooded male that settled in the 'scope for some time.

Barred Fruiteater

Pipreola arcuata

A foggy morning made it tough for this one. On hearing a calling bird I played the call back and the bird immediately flew into the trees above us, just as a thick bank of low cloud came down and blocked our view, very frustrating indeed!

Orange-breasted Fruiteater

Pipreola jucunda

The male of this species is for me one of the very best birds in the Choco region. We had a superb male first at Mashpi, where it remained on our scope for some time. Another male was found near the café at Paz de las Aves on our last morning. Amazingly and inexplicably overlooked by everyone when debating the best trip birds at the end of the tour.

Scaled Fruiteater

Ampelioides tschudii

*When visiting Paz de las Aves we were informed that a particular set of trees had been good for this and other frugivorous species of late. So we opted to keep watch on these trees for some time in the hope of picking up this and other species. All was quiet for a while and then gradually one by one a number of species came into the tree, including a pair of **Toucan Barbets**, four **Golden-headed Quetzals**, three **Crimson-rumped Toucanets**, several **Andean Cock-of-the-rocks**, and a male of this species.*

Andean Cock-of-the-rock

Rupicola peruvianus

One of the quintessential Andean birds that is rightly, and very understandably, a priority among visiting birders. With this in mind we tried for them on our very first day, and were rewarded with views of up to 8 displaying males at a regular lek site. Three or more females were also seen on our final day, visiting a large fruiting that also held Toucan Barbets, Scaled Fruiteater, and a number of Golden-headed Quetzals.

Olivaceous Piha

Snowornis cryptolophus

Two sightings were made at Paz de las Aves on our final incredible morning there. The initial bird sneaked into a fruiting tree, that also held a pair of Toucan Barbets, three or more female Andean Cock-of-the-rock, a male Scaled Fruiteater, several Crimson-rumped Toucanets, and four Golden-headed Quetzals. However, with all the other birds in the tree distracting us, it slipped in and out largely unnoticed by most of us. A little later that morning, while we settled in to wait for the tardy appearance of the Yellow-breasted Antpitta, one of these chunky olive cotingas came in to a tree overhead, where it fed in the open this time, so that we all picked it up, and enjoyed some great views in the process.

Purple-throated Fruitcrow

Querula purpurata

A male flew over the tower at Rio Silanche.

MANAKINS

PIPRIDAE

Golden-winged Manakin

Masius chrysopterus

An adult male and immature male were seen in the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

Club-winged Manakin

Machaeropterus deliciosus

One was seen displaying near the edge of the forest in the Milpe Bird Sanctuary. When displaying this unique manakin makes a distinctive burring noise created entirely by rubbing their clubbed wings together at high speed.

White-bearded Manakin

Manacus manacus

A female was seen at Milpe, although a full spanking adult male was seen and photographed at Rio Silanche a few days later.

TITYRAS AND ALLIES

TITYRIDAE

Cinnamon Becard

Pachyramphus cinnamomeus

Recorded at Milpe, Silanche, and also at Paz de las Aves.

GO White-winged Becard

Pachyramphus polychopterus dorsalis

A male came through in a mixed flock at Milpe.

Black-and-white Becard

Pachyramphus albogriseus

One was seen in a mixed flock in the lowland reserve of Rio Silanche.

One-colored Becard

Pachyramphus homochrous

A few were seen at Milpe, and a single was seen at Mashpi.

VIREOS

VIREONIDAE

Red-eyed Vireo

Vireo olivaceus

Seen at both Milpe and Rio Silanche.

Lesser Greenlet

Hylophilus decurtatus

Singles were seen in the foothills at Milpe and Rio Silanche.

CROWS JAYS AND MAGPIES

Turquoise Jay

Recorded along a temperate forest section of the Old Nono-Mindo Road, the same road that also brought us a small troop of Beautiful Jays along a lower section of the same road later that same afternoon.

Beautiful Jay

Late on our first afternoon we found a small group of these endemic jays along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, a short time before we reached Tandayapa Lodge.

CORVIDAE

Cyanolyca turcosa

Cyanolyca pulchra

SWALLOWS

Blue-and-white Swallow

A common swallow that was recorded every day of the tour, from the subtropics down into the lowlands.

Brown-bellied Swallow

One was seen on the way back into Quito on our final day.

White-thighed Swallow

One was seen late in the afternoon along the road out of Rio Silanche.

Southern Rough-winged Swallow

Commonly recorded in the lowlands and foothills.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Pygochelidon cyanoleuca

Orochelidon murina

Atticora tibialis

Stelgidopteryx ruficollis

WRENS

H Band-backed Wren

Heard once along the Milpe Road.

Rufous Wren

Several small groups were seen along the trail at Yanacocha on our first morning.

Sharpe's (Sepia-brown) Wren

At least three birds were found in an understorey flock just outside Paz de las Aves refuge.

H Plain-tailed Wren

Several birds were heard calling from dense stands of bamboo in the Tandayapa Valley.

H Bay Wren

This furtive wren was heard at Milpe, Mashpi, and Silanche.

House Wren

One was seen along the road into Rio Silanche.

Mountain Wren

Three sightings were made: at Yanacocha, along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, and also at Paz de las Aves.

H Sedge (Grass) Wren

Some distantly calling birds were heard on our way up to Yanacocha.

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren

Seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and again at Paz de las Aves.

H Scaly-breasted (Southern Nightingale) Wren *Microcerculus marginatus*

Heard around both Milpe and Rio Silanche.

TROGLODYTIDAE

Campylorhynchus zonatus

Cinnycerthia unirufa

Cinnycerthia olivascens

Thryothorus euophrys

Thryothorus nigricapillus

Troglodytes aedon

Troglodytes solstitialis

Cistothorus platensis aequatorialis

Henicorhina leucophrys

DIPPERS

White-capped Dipper

Four birds were found feeding in the Rio Alambi, on our first afternoon. A final sighting came on our last morning when we found a bird along a river at the base of the valley in the Paz de las Aves refuge, where we had waited successfully for a **Yellow-breasted Antpitta** to appear.

GNATCATCHERS

Tawny-faced Gnatwren

One was seen late in the afternoon along a forest trail at Rio Silanche.

Tropical Gnatcatcher

Three birds were seen in a cleared area en-route to Rio Silanche.

THRUSHES AND ALLIES

Andean Solitaire

One was seen while we were waiting for another (much rarer) solitaire to appear at Mashpi (**Black Solitaire**). Another flushed out of its nest along a forest trail at Paz de las Aves.

H Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush

One was heard calling from an area of dense undergrowth in the Tandayapa Valley.

Swainson's Thrush

This boreal migrant was recorded on five out of six days of the tour, around Tandayapa, Milpe, and Silanche.

Black Solitaire

This dapper endemic was seen several times at Mashpi Forest.

Spectacled (Ecuadorian) Thrush

Heard around Tandayapa Lodge, and seen several times within the MCF sanctuary at Rio Silanche.

NB. This was recently lumped with **Bare-eyed Thrush**, and given the name **Spectacled Thrush**. This "form", or species, if split, is confined to humid regions in western Ecuador and NW Peru.

Great Thrush

Recorded regularly on the way up to Yanacocha, and also in the Upper Tandayapa Valley, and at Calacali.

Glossy-black Thrush

The same bird was seen singing from a treetop along the Old Nono-Mindo Road on several occasions, where many others were also heard.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS

Tropical Parula

Two were seen at Milpe, and another single was seen at Mashpi.

Blackburnian Warbler

Good numbers were seen on the tour, in the Tandayapa Valley, Milpe, Mashpi, and finally at Paz de las Aves.

Black-and-white Warbler

One was found in the lower Tandayapa Valley.

Olive-crowned Yellowthroat

A male was seen late in the afternoon along the Milpe Road.

CINCLIDAE

Cinclus leucocephalus

POLIOPTILIDAE

Microbates cinereiventris

Polioptila plumbea

TURDIDAE

Myadestes ralloides

Catharus fuscater

Catharus ustulatus

Entomodestes coracinus

Turdus nudigenis maculirostris

Turdus fuscater

Turdus serranus

PARULIDAE

Parula pitiayumi

Dendroica fusca

Mniotilta varia

Geothlypis semiflava

Slate-throated Redstart (Whitestart)

Myioborus miniatus

Small numbers were seen on most days of the tour, from the subtropics down into the foothills.

Spectacled Redstart (Whitestart)

Myioborus melanocephalus

A number of them were seen in mixed flocks along the trail at Yanacocha on our first day. Others were seen in the subtropical forests within the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Golden-bellied (Chocó) Warbler

Basileuterus chrysogaster chlorophrys

Small numbers were seen in mixed foothill flocks at Milpe and Mashpi.

Black-crested Warbler

Basileuterus nigrocristatus

One showed well along the Old Nono-Mindo Road as we made our way from Yanacocha to Tandayapa Lodge.

Russet-crowned Warbler

Basileuterus coronatus

Also seen along the Old Nono-Mindo Road on our first afternoon.

Three-striped Warbler

Basileuterus tristriatus

Seen around Milpe, Mashpi, and finally in Paz de las Aves on our final day.

Buff-rumped Warbler

Phaeothlypis fulvicauda

One of these ground-dwelling warblers was seen near the parking lot at Rio Silanche.

BANANAQUIT

COEREBIDAE

Bananaquit

Coereba flaveola

A few birds were visiting the hummingbird feeders at both Tandayapa Lodge and within the Milpe Bird Sanctuary. Others were seen in the lowlands at Rio Silanche.

TANAGERS AND ALLIES

THRAUPIDAE

Superciliaried Hemispingus

Hemispingus superciliaris

Several of these extravagantly named tanagers were seen in mixed flocks within the temperate forest reserve of Yanacocha.

Rufous-chested Tanager

Thlypopsis ornata

Two of these smart tanagers were seen on the tour, one along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, and another in the Tandayapa Valley.

Cinereous Conebill

Conirostrum cinereum

Only recorded on our first morning in the Yanacocha reserve.

Blue-backed Conebill

Conirostrum sitticolor

Normally a straightforward bird to find within the feeding flocks that roam the temperate forest reserve of Yanacocha. However, they proved difficult on this tour as a result of the thick cloud hanging over the reserve causing very limited visibility. Just a couple were seen in a fast-moving flock as we walked back along the track there.

Capped Conebill

Conirostrum albifrons

Just a few were seen in a small flock in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Dusky Bush-Tanager

Chlorospingus semifuscus

Two were seen at Milpe, another along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, and lastly at Refugio Paz de las Aves.

Yellow-throated Bush-Tanager

Chlorospingus flavigularis

Regularly seen during our day in the foothills at Milpe.

Guira Tanager

Hemithraupis guira

One was seen at Milpe, and another two were seen within the reserve at Rio Silanche.

H Dusky-faced Tanager

Mitrospingus cassinii

Heard calling from the forest undergrowth in Rio Silanche.

Ochre-breasted Tanager

Chlorothraupis stolzmanni

Just recorded on the one day, in the foothills of Milpe, where it was seen within mixed feeding flocks in two reserves in the area.

Scarlet-browed Tanager

Heterospingus xanthopygius

A bird was seen sitting quietly in a tree preening, while we looked on from the canopy tower at Rio Silanche.

White-shouldered Tanager

Tachyphonus luctuosus

Seen in both the foothills (Milpe), and lowlands (Silanche).

White-lined Tanager

Tachyphonus rufus

A pair came in to feed at the fruit feeders within the Milpe Bird Sanctuary while we sheltered from the rain, and another pair were seen on along the road into Rio Silanche.

Summer Tanager

Piranga rubra

Wintering birds were found at Tandayapa Lodge, Milpe, Mashpi, and lastly at Paz de las Aves.

White-winged Tanager

Piranga leucoptera

One was seen towards the lower end of the Tandayapa Valley.

Flame-rumped (Lemon-rumped) Tanager

Ramphocelus flammigerus icteronotus

Commonly encountered around Silanche and also in Milpe too.

Blue-gray Tanager

Thraupis episcopus

Recorded regularly in the lowlands and foothills, with the odd sighting around Tandayapa Lodge too.

Palm Tanager

Thraupis palmarum

Seen coming to the fruit feeders at Milpe, and also at Mashpi. Although they were most regularly recorded at Rio Silanche.

Blue-capped Tanager

Thraupis cyanocephala

Two were seen in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

Moss-backed Tanager

Bangsia edwardsi

One bird caused us to make an emergency stop en-route to Mashpi, and remained "fastened" to the top of the tree that allowed us all to get great scope views of this scarce and local endemic. This species was formerly regular at Milpe, although has become inexplicably rare there in recent times.

Hooded Mountain-Tanager

Buthraupis montana

Several were found along the trail at Yanacocha, where we recorded four species of mountain-tanager during our morning: **Scarlet-bellied, Black-chested, and Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanagers.**

Black-chested Mountain-Tanager

Buthraupis eximia

A pair was found within a mixed flock at Yanacocha that also held a few **Hooded Mountain-Tanagers** in addition to several **Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanagers** too.

Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager

Anisognathus igniventris

Several flocks encountered along the Inca Trail at Yanacocha contained this hefty tanager species.

Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager

Anisognathus somptuosus

Scattered sightings were made within the subtropics and foothills.

Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager

Anisognathus notabilis

One was seen en-route to Mashpi Forest, where another mixed flock there held at least three more birds, that were in a flock with other endemics including **Toucan Barbets** and **Glistening-green Tanagers.**

Grass-green Tanager

Chlorornis riefferii

Two were seen late one afternoon along the Old Nono-Mindo Road, thanks in no small part to our eagle-eyed driver Nico.

Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager

Dubusia taeniata

A suspires find near the start of our morning walk at Yanacocha reserve, where it is a scarce and rarely seen species.

Golden-crowned Tanager

Iridosornis rufivertex

Two of these gorgeous tanagers were found within a large feeding flock late in the morning at Yanacocha.

Fawn-breasted Tanager

Pipraeidea melanonota

One was seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and several were later seen en-route to Mashpi.

Glistening-green Tanager

Chlorochrysa phoenicotis

Another stunning Choco tanager, that is all bright shimmering emerald green. Three birds were found within a feeding flock within Mashpi. The same flock also held a **Pacific Tuftedcheek**.

Gray-and-gold Tanager

Tangara palmeri

Thanks to another person birding the area, who kindly called us over we saw one of these distinctive tanagers in a small private reserve at Milpe, with later sightings in lowland forest at Rio Silanche.

Blue-whiskered Tanager

Tangara johannae

One appeared suddenly, and dramatically, by the tower at Rio Silanche that unfortunately did not hang about long enough for everyone to see it.

Golden Tanager

Tangara arthus

A few were seen in various flocks within some subtropical forests, and also down into the foothills.

Silver-throated Tanager

Tangara icterocephala

One was seen at the lower end of the Tandayapa Valley, although much better views were had the next day within the MCF Milpe Bird Sanctuary. While we sheltered from the rain in the café there a number of birds came in to feed on the bananas at the feeders, including three of these tanagers, as well as **Blue-necked, Palm, Flame-rumped, White-lined, and Golden Tanagers, and Orange-bellied and Thick-billed Euphonias.**

Flame-faced Tanager

Tangara parzudakii

With few mixed flocks encountered in the subtropical zone (around the Tandayapa Valley and Paz de las Aves) just the one sighting was made, within a mixed flock in the Tandayapa Valley. We encountered this flock around midday when the heat of the day and bright sunshine was at its most, causing the flock to pause for a while in the trees above, allowing us to scope up this stunning tanager for a long time, while it preened and rested up.

Rufous-throated Tanager

Tangara rufigula

Two came through with a foothill flock within the MCF Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and another came through very swiftly with another foothill party at Mashpi Forest.

Bay-headed Tanager

Tangara gyrola

A few of these multicolored tanagers were seen at Milpe and Rio Silanche.

Rufous-winged Tanager

Tangara lavinia

Carol got an exclusive look at one of these colorful tanagers from the canopy tower at Rio Silanche.

Golden-naped Tanager

Tangara ruficervix

Three were seen in the subtropical forests of Tandayapa and Paz de las Aves, and further sightings were made in the foothills at Mashpi.

Metallic-green Tanager

Tangara labradorides

While we waited for our fourth and final antpitta of the morning, Ochre-breasted, during our morning in the subtropical forest reserve of Paz de las Aves, a flock came through with at least one of these tanagers in their midst. This turned out to be our 50th tanager species of the trip!

Blue-necked Tanager

Tangara cyanicollis

Two came into the fruit feeders in the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation Milpe Bird Sanctuary, while we sheltered in their café from a heavy downpour. Others were seen in the lowland forest reserve of Rio Silanche.

Golden-hooded Tanager

Tangara larvata

Several were seen at Rio Silanche, on the penultimate day of the tour.

Beryl-spangled Tanager

Tangara nigroviridis

Recorded in the Tandayapa Valley, en-route to Mashpi, and lastly in the subtropical forest reserve of Paz de las Aves.

Blue-and-black Tanager

Tangara vassorii

One was seen by some in the Mashpi area, a surprisingly low elevation for the species.

Black-capped Tanager

Tangara heinei

One was seen within the lower Tandayapa Valley, and another was seen at the Mindo end of the Nono-Mindo Ecoroute.

Black-faced (Yellow-tufted) Dacnis

Dacnis lineata aequatorialis

One of the most striking tanagers in the region, the males of which are electric blue and black, with canary yellow flashes along the sides, and a piercing yellow eye. For this reason this bird was nominated as one of the **BIRDS OF THE TRIP**. Several were seen from the canopy tower at Rio Silanche.

Scarlet-thighed Dacnis

Dacnis venusta

A gorgeous male and several accompanying females were seen perched in some close trees right beside the tower at Rio Silanche.

Green Honeycreeper

Chlorophanes spiza

Several were seen in the lowlands at Rio Silanche.

Purple Honeycreeper

Cyanerpes caeruleus

Just the one bird was seen in the lowland reserve of Rio Silanche.

Swallow-Tanager

Tersina viridis

A few electric blue males were seen along the Milpe Road, late in the afternoon, and the following day a few were more seen en-route to Mashpi.

SPARROWS AND SEEDEATERS

EMBERIZIDAE

Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch

Phrygilus plebejus

Several were seen in the dry scrub of Calacali, during our final afternoons birding.

Blue-black Grassquit

Volatinia jacarina

One male was seen in a cleared area along the entrance track into Rio Silanche MCF reserve.

Variable Seedeater

Sporophila corvina

Regularly encountered, both in the foothills and lowlands.

Yellow-bellied Seedeater

Sporophila nigricollis

Seen along the Milpe Road, and also regularly seen along the entrance track as we made our way into Rio Silanche.

Thick-billed (Lesser) Seed-Finch

Oryzoborus (angolensis) funereus

A male was seen along the Milpe Road, and a female was seen en-route to the lowland reserve of Rio Silanche.

Band-tailed Seedeater

Catamenia analis

One was seen at Calacali, that is located within the dry inter-Andean valley that Ecuador's capital, Quito, also lies within.

Plain-colored Seedeater

Catamenia inornata

Several small parties of these finches were seen along the road up to Yanacocha on our first morning.

Yellow-faced Grassquit

Tiaris olivaceus

A pair of these strikingly marked seedeaters were seen by the road out of Mashpi.

Glossy Flowerpiercer

Diglossa lafresnayii

Commonly encountered at Yanacocha, including a number of birds that visited the hummingbird feeders there.

White-sided Flowerpiercer

Diglossa albilatera

One male was seen beside the Old Nono-Mindo Road, and another was seen in a mixed feeding flock in the Tandayapa Valley.

Indigo Flowerpiercer

Diglossa indigotica

One of the rarest birds recorded on the tour, a bird that is more typically found further north than the province we were in (Pichincha), nearer the Colombian border. However, in recent months a number of people had discovered a few at a site, Mashpi, not too far from our base Tandayapa Lodge. I could not resist checking this site out again, and was very pleased with our endemic filled morning there, that included not only a pair of these rare flowerpiercers, but also a male **Orange-breasted Fruiteater**, a striking **Black Solitaire**, several **Glistening-green Tanagers**, a **Moss-backed Tanager**, **Pacific Tuftedcheek**, numerous **Toucan Barbets**, and a number of **Black-chinned Mountain-Tanagers**.

Masked Flowerpiercer

Diglossa cyaneus

Although not as common as **Glossy Flowerpiercer**, another fairly commonly encountered bird at Yanacocha on our first day. A few others were seen lower down in the subtropics, along the Old Nono-Mindo Road.

Tanager Finch

Oreothraupis arremonops

A unique, rare, and localized species confined to the Choco region. For this reason it is always a huge target bird for visiting birders. Thankfully on this tour the bird did not give us too much trouble, where we found it at the second of two stakeouts we tried on our first morning in the Tandayapa Valley, much to my relief! One bird responded strikingly, and emerged out of the dense understorey to sing back at us for some time, affording us all excellent views.

Tricolored Brush-Finch

Atlapetes tricolor crassus

One was seen near Paz de las Aves refuge on our final day.

NB. Some authors, (e.g. in Ridgely, R. S. & Tudor, G. 2009. **Birds of South America.**

Passerines. Christopher Helm, London.), split the "form" in the northwest of Ecuador and southwest of Colombia as **Chocó Brush-Finch**, **A. crassus**. When split the species becomes a regional endemic.

Yellow-breasted (Rufous-naped) Brush-Finch

Atlapetes latinuchus spodionotus

Several were seen during our morning in Yanacocha, and another pair were found the following day in the Upper Tandayapa Valley.

White-winged Brush-Finch

Atlapetes leucopterus

A pair were found in the Tandayapa Valley.

H *Crimson-breasted Finch*

Rhodospingus cruentus

Frustratingly a few were heard (and not seen) calling along the track into Rio Silanche, where it is an erratic visitor from further south. The birds core range is in the Tumbesian region to the south of the region we visited on this tour.

Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch

Arremon brunneinucha

One appeared for a short time by the hummingbird veranda at Tandayapa Lodge, another was seen bouncing along the trail ahead of us at Paz de las Aves, where another was seen just outside the refuge.

Orange-billed Sparrow

Arremon aurantirostris

Just the one bird was seen at Milpe, where a bird came into the fruit feeders briefly in the MCF sanctuary.

Stripe-headed Brush-Finch

Arremon torquatus

One passed by quickly on the way up to Yanacocha.

Rufous-collared Sparrow

Zonotrichia capensis

Recorded in good numbers as we drove up to Yanacocha, with a scattering of sightings elsewhere.

SALTATORS AND CARDINALS

CARDINALIDAE

Buff-throated Saltator

Saltator maximus

First seen low down in the Tandayapa Valley, and later seen again multiple times at Rio Silanche, and also within Paz de las Aves.

Black-winged Saltator

Saltator atripennis

Recorded in the Tandayapa Valley, Mashpi, and in Rio Silanche.

Slate-colored Grosbeak

Saltator grossus

One of these striking grosbeaks was seen in the forest at Milpe.

Golden-bellied (Southern Yellow) Grosbeak *Pheucticus chrysogaster*

This was one of the first birds seen on our drive up to the temperate reserve of Yanacocha on our first day. Other singles were seen in the Tandayapa Valley, and also in the refuge at Paz de las Aves.

TROUPIALS AND ALLIES

ICTERIDAE

Scrub Blackbird

Dives warszewiczi

Several were seen on the outskirts of San Miguel de Los Bancos, and others were seen along the road into Rio Silanche.

Shiny Cowbird

Molothrus bonariensis

A pair were seen along the entrance road into Silanche.

Yellow-tailed Oriole

Icterus mesomelas

This scorching bird was seen in a largely cleared area, along the entrance track into the lowland forest reserve of Rio Silanche.

H Scarlet-rumped Cacique

Cacicus uropygialis

Surprisingly, just heard around the reserve at Rio Silanche.

SISKINS AND ALLIES

FRINGILLIDAE

Orange-crowned Euphonia

Euphonia saturata

A pair were watched feeding on small green fruits from the canopy tower at Rio Silanche.

Thick-billed Euphonia

Euphonia lanirostris

First a female was seen in the Tandayapa Valley, then several birds were seen visiting the fruit feeders within the Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and finally one was seen from the tower in Rio Silanche.

Golden-rumped Euphonia

Euphonia cyanocephala

A spanking male, complete with dove-blue hood, was seen en-route to Mashpi. Other birds were seen during our final birding session, at Calacali near to Ecuador's capital Quito.

Orange-bellied Euphonia

Euphonia xanthogaster

Recorded on five of six days on the tour, and at all sites except for the higher elevation, temperate site of Yanacocha.

H Yellow-collared Chlorophonia

Chlorophonia flavirostris

One was heard calling really close late in the morning at Paz de las Aves, although we could not locate it before it moved away.

Yellow-bellied Siskin

Carduelis xanthogastra

One was seen late in the afternoon along the Milpe Road, in the foothills.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

PASSERIDAE

H House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Heard on the outskirts of San Miguel de Los Bancos as we made our way to Rio Silanche, although I thought better of waking people up for this one!



BOOTED RACKET-TAIL Tandayapa Lodge