

## **ECUADOR 2012 NOVEMBER 13-December19**

In 2011 when I saw Wildwings offered a trip to see Spectacled bear and Mountain tapir in Ecuador, and that apparently the tapir was not too difficult I booked this tour. This tour was lead by Richard Webb and was mainly oriented to see these 2 species, but there was also a few days stay in Amazonia at Napo Wildlife center and short visits at Maqipucuna reserve, Cabanas San Isidro and Wildsumaco . In Amazonia we saw 3 Giant otter, 1 Collared peccary, Golden mantled tamarin, Pygmy marmoset, Common squirrel monkey, White fronted capuchin, Noisy night monkey, Double browed titi, Venezuelan red Howler monkey, 1 Spider monkey and 1 Brown-throated three-toed sloth, but we missed Equatorial saki and Common woolly monkey. All these species were in low numbers, but it is true that we didn't walk a lot. At Maqipucuna we didn't see any mammal. At Wild Sumaco we got a Red tailed squirrel and saw 10 of them at Cabanas San Isidro with 1 Black agouti and a Long-tailed weasel, plus footprints of Mountain tapir.

For the bear and the tapir we tried several places, but mainly Papallacta in Coca Cayambe reserve. In 4 days we saw from the roads: 2 different bears, a few White tailed deers, 1 Culpeo, 2 Forest rabbits but no tapir. By night several members of the group glimpsed a deer, either Little red brocket or Northern Pudu. Our local guide, Patricio Pillajo told me several times that to see the tapir from the roads was very rare. On the last day, Richard Webb offered me to go for a morning walk with Patricio. I saw 3 different bears (including 1 seen the day before) but unfortunately only footprints and droppings of tapir. At that moment, I decided to come back alone to try my luck with Patricio who gave me his contact.

## **COCA CAYAMBE RESERVE November 16-22**

On the 13th of November I was back in Quito. I had contacted Patricio a few months before. Twice Patricio wrote me to tell me that the tapir was very very difficult to see (once he was with Jon Hall who finally saw one; the second time he was with a group of Destination Nature who got a very bad sighting of one).

After 2 days of acclimatisation in Quito I headed to Pappallacta (3000 m high) and stayed for 5 days with Patricio or his brother Mario. The first day, after a little of scanning, we began to walk. Forty minutes later I found a Mountain Tapir standing on a ridge. It was looking in our direction, trying to smell us. Half an hour later, we decided to approach it, walking round the mountain. We had to climb hard but we arrived just above it, walked down to get 20m from it. The tapir was sleeping. We sat down. It heard us, stood up trying to smell us again, but fortunately the wind was for us and like all tapirs have a bad eyesight. After a while it sat down. Later Mario whistled it. The tapir stood up again, tried to smell and see us and even approached us, and finally laid on the ground. After one hour we decided to leave, without disturbing it. Two hours later during our walk back to the car we saw a Spectacled bear.

During the 4 following days we looked hard and walked a lot in and outside the reserve, but saw only another Bear, a few White tailed deers and Forest rabbits and fresh footprints of Puma. But there were fresh evidences of both tapir and bears at most of places where we went. Our search for Northern pudu and Little red brocket deer was unsuccessfull but they are apparently very rare, according to Pillajo brothers. We saw several Forest rabbits and a lot of faeces of Culpeo.

Patricio and Mario (T 0985102556-email: [silvirlife2@hotmail.com](mailto:silvirlife2@hotmail.com)); are very helpful and do the best they can do. You don't need to hire a car from Quito. You can reach easily Papallacta by bus. Mario is a taxi driver. He has a pick up and can drive you where you want. Patricio and Mario have opened a small travel agency and offer different tours to see wildlife, inside and outside the reserve. They don't know everything, but learn fast and are very helpful.

Patricio told me he knows a place near Baeza where the tapir is guaranteed, but you have to climb 1000m and to camp.

## **THE GALAPAGOS November 22-December 2**

I had booked a tour with SANGAY TOURING on the catamaran-Nemos 2- for 8 days visiting the islands where I hoped to see most of the endemic birds and the few large mammals present. There were only 11 other tourists on the boat. The tour visited Baltra, North Seymour, Daphne, Santa Cruz, Isabela, Fernandina, Santiago, Rabida and Genovesa. It proved to be perfect. About the mammals I got plenty of Galapagos (California sea lion (depending of the classification) on most of the islands and Galapagos Fur seals at the 2 expected places: 7 at Puerto Egas on the west side of Santiago and 6 at Genovesa. When snorkelling, the sea-lions were always very playful, but I saw only 2 fur seals coming next to me and disappearing immediately. They are said to be shy in the water. I also saw 4 Bryde's whales, at least 2 Common dolphins and 20 (2 pods) Bottle nosed dolphins between Isabela and Fernandina.

Before the tour I stayed independently 2 days on Santa Cruz to see wild Giant tortoises and birds.

## **THE SOUTH: GUAYAQUIL, PUYANGO RESERVE, PODOCARPUS NATIONAL PARK- December 3-December 7**

From the Galapagos I flew to Guayaquil, then went to 2 places:

-Puyango reserve where I expected Guayaquil squirrels (14 seen) and Sechuran fox (present, but rare and improbable with the number of dogs around the village). I saw also a fresh dead Mouse opossum (*Marmosa robinsoni*).

-Podocarpus national park (Cajanuma entrance). I saw only a Tayra by daylight in the forest at the top of a tall tree, but Spectacled bears, Moluntain tapirs, Coatis (which one?) and Brocket deer (which one) are also present (numerous photos at the entrance).

Then I headed back to Quito.

## **AMAZONIA : SANI LODGE December 10 to 14**

After my 2011 stay at Napo Wildlife Center I had chosen to stay at Sani Lodge (cheaper and a chance to see 2 new monkeys missed in 2011). It proved again to be a good choice. For the price of camping I got a nice bungalow as all the other tourists. I had booked a private guide to look for mammals and special birds and I was very satisfied of my guide: Domingo Gualingo. His knowledge of birds is great and he did the best to find some mammals. In less than 3 days and a half I saw far more mammals than at Napo. It is true that we walked a lot and silently (what I liked), sometimes from 4h30 to 18h30.

It included: more than 200 monkeys (Red howler monkey, Dusky titi monkey, Noisy night monkey, Graell's tamarin, White fronted capuchin, Common squirrel monkey, Pygmy marmoset and Common Woolly monkey)(all the species were commonly seen and on one day we even saw a group of more of 50 Woolly monkeys), 1 Giant otter, 1 Collared peccary, 1 baby White lipped peccary just rescued in the middle of the Rio Napo, 1 Common opossum seen 3 times near the lodge, 2 Green accouchis, 1 Black agouti, 1 Brown throated Three-toed sloth, Greater fishing bats, Proboscis bats and the best 1 Giant armadillo at 4h30 on one morning on a trail, just 10m from us as we were looking for Nocturnal curassow). A Nine banded armadillos was seen by the other tourists not far from the lodge.

## **BELLAVISTA LODGE AND REFUGIO PAZ DE LAS AVES Near MINDO December 15 to 17**

At both places I saw several Red tailed squirrels. At the refugio Paz de las Aves I also got a Western 2 toed sloth.

While I was at Bellavista the owner told me that the Andean coati is sometimes seen. An Australian girl saw a coati just near the lodge but she didn't know which species (I saw the numerous holes made in the soil by the animal).

At Regugio Paz de las Aves (lower down than Bellavista) the owner (Angel Paz) explained me that they are 2 species of Coatis and that 1 Olingo is used to raid the fruits disposed to birds during winter time.

While I was at the latter place I got the information that 3 Bears were the days before eating fruits in a tree at Maquipucuna reserve(not far from Mindo). I phoned to the reserve, got the information they were around since 3 weeks but that all the compulsory guides were booked. So no luck this time. In 2011 we went there late August with Richard Webb in order to look for bears. A researcher explained us that when trees have fruits, the bears stay several days in the same tree, but it was not the right time. According to the informations I got, november and december are the good months.