

## Northern Ecuador – 2009

14<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> February.

This trip was a two part tour, the first being the ‘Cock of the Rock’ departure run by Naturetrek ( [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) ) and the second a private extension to the excellent Napo Wildlife Center in the Amazon basin. This was also arranged through Naturetrek with Andy Tucker giving us advice on suitable destinations, allowing for the more mammal orientated programme in the second part.

### **Flights:**

We used Iberian Airlines via Madrid and VIP airlines for our internal flight from Quito to Coca.

### **Weather:**

Our trip coincided with some appalling weather – rain of almost biblical proportions !! This caused various logistical problems, as there were dozens of landslides, and several roads that we had intended to travel on, had completely disappeared !! It was with some relief that when we reached Napo, we had three days of dry and sunny weather – although violent thunderstorms on the day we left were unsurprising...

### **Guides:**

We were fortunate to have the services of Willy Perez for the first part of the trip, and his brother, Edwin at Napo. All visitors to Napo also have a local guide assigned to them; ours was called Papa and our boatman was Wilbur. They were a great team, with astonishing eyesight and worked very hard to make our time as successful as possible.

### **Itinerary:**

- 14<sup>th</sup> - Fly to Madrid and then to Quito arriving at approx 18.30 local time. Night in small hotel in Quito ( Hostal Fuente de Piedra 1 )
- 15<sup>th</sup> - Drive to Yanacocha for birding and from there, the Nono – Mindo road to Maquipucuna.
- 16<sup>th</sup> - All day around the Maquipucuna reserve.
- 17<sup>th</sup> - Morning at Maquipucuna, then drive to small lodge near Milpe.
- 18<sup>th</sup> - Very early visit to the nearby forest reserve for Andean Cock of the Rock and ( hopefully ) Antpittas !! Return to Quito supposedly via the Bellavista lodge – abandoned as the road had vanished !!

- 19<sup>th</sup> - Morning drive up to the Papallacta Pass. Time around the summit hoping the persistent cloud would lift !! Drive down the eastern Andean slope to the Guango Lodge.
- 20<sup>th</sup> - Early start to visit the lodge at San Isidro for the whole day ( further down the eastern slope ).
- 21<sup>st</sup> - Morning around Guango lodge then drive back to the Papallacta pass, before returning to Quito late afternoon. ( Main group fly home )
- 22<sup>nd</sup> - Private days birding with Willy Perez at Antisana. Night in Quito.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> - Fly to Coca, then river boat to the Napo Wildlife Center – 2 hours on main river motorised, and about 2 hours paddling on the side channel to the lodge, as motorised boats are not allowed, so as to not disturb the wildlife.
- 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> - Three full days at NWC
- 27<sup>th</sup> - Transfer back to Coca, fly to Quito, and then back to London via Madrid.

### **Birds:**

With the vast potential bird list in Ecuador, it does not make sense to list all the species that we saw !!

We actually noted 440 species during the trip, which considering the weather, was very good.

Some key species included : Sword-billed and Giant Hummingbirds amongst 42 species seen, 6 species of Antpitta including Giant, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, Barred, Scaled & Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Zigzag Heron, Azure Gallinule, Crested Owl, Lanceolated Monklet, Amazonian Umbrellabird, and Black-necked Red Cotinga.

### **Mammals:**

Research on past trips suggested that the first part of the tour would produce few, if any mammals...

We were pleasantly surprised to get 8 species...

#### Part 1 – Cloudforest.

Nine-banded Armadillo - *Dasyus novemcinctus* - 1 at Angel Paz's reserve on 18<sup>th</sup> was a surprise.

Forest Rabbit ( Tapiti ) - *Sylvilagus brasiliensis* - Seen on four days, with in excess of 30 noted.

Maybe the poor weather encouraged them to be out in the daytime ? Peak numbers were seen on the drive to Papallacta on 19<sup>th</sup> and Antisana on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Red-tailed Squirrel - *Sciurus granatensis* - Seen on three days; 1 at Maquipucuna and 1 each at Guango and San Isidro.

Central American Agouti - *Dasyprocta punctata* - 2+ individuals near the lodge at Maquipucuna on

16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. One allowed a careful approach for good photos. This species is apparently found only on the western Andean slope in Ecuador.

Black Agouti - *Dasyprocta fuliginosa* - 2 were seen and photographed by Karen at San Isidro near the hummingbird feeders on 20<sup>th</sup>. They are supposed to come here fairly frequently.

Long-tailed Weasel - *Mustela frenata* - 1 ran across the road in front of the group at San Isidro on 20<sup>th</sup> and our driver had one in the car park at Guango Lodge on 21<sup>st</sup> when he was cleaning the vehicle !!

Jamaican Fruit Bat - *Artibeus jamaicensis* - One around the lodge at Maquipucuna 16<sup>th</sup>.

White-tailed Deer - *Odocoileus virginianus* - One male on a ridge near Antisana on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

#### Part 2 – Amazon basin.

This part of the trip was supposedly going to produce more mammal options ( especially primates ), but 16 species was definitely at the top end of our expectations ! There was no overlap between the two parts of the trip – giving a total of 24 species overall...

Northern Amazon Red Squirrel - *Sciurus igniventris* - 1 showed well at the start of the Tiputini trail at dawn on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Given the difficulty of separating this from the Southern Amazon Red Squirrel ( both are on the reserve list ); we had to rely on the guides' knowledge !

Amazon Dwarf Squirrel - *Microsciurus flaviventer* - 1 of these thankfully unmistakable tiny squirrels on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Green Acouchi - *Myoprocta exilis* - 1 gave prolonged views alongside one of the boardwalks to the Parrot – licks by the main Napo river on 25<sup>th</sup>.

Giant River Otter - *Pteronura brasiliensis* - 2 superb individuals appeared in front of the cabins for 10 minutes or so in the mid afternoon on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Tayra - *Eira barbara* - 1 crossed the boardwalk and bounded up the slope near the Parrot-lick on 25<sup>th</sup>.

Proboscis Bat - *Rhynchonycteris naso* - 6 – 8 were roosting on a pole near the landing stage at NWC.

Greater Fishing Bat - *Noctilio leporinus* - seen every evening on the lake by the lodge.

Golden-mantled Tamarin - *Saguinus tripartitus* - The star mammal at NWC, and well worth the billing !! We had two different troupes; 10 on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 18 on the 26<sup>th</sup>.



*Golden-mantled Tamarin.*

Pygmy Marmoset - *Callithrix pygmaea* - At the second attempt, we had three of these delightful little Marmosets drinking sap from their chosen tree.

Common Squirrel Monkey - *Saimiri sciureus* - Good numbers seen every day, with a maximum of 30 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

White-fronted Capuchin - *Cebus albifrons* - Seen on two days, with 20 on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 14 on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Noisy Night Monkey - *Aotus vociferans* - 6 were seen emerging from their roost on the 26<sup>th</sup> at dusk.

Double-browed Titi - *Callicebus discolor* - 3 showed well near to the main lodge on the 26<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon. The information on the ranges of the various Titi Monkeys is highly confusing, but Dusky which is claimed here, is far out of range since the splitting of this group...

Monk Saki - *Pithecia monachus* - Having thought that we had missed this, 4+ from the boat shortly after dawn on the 27<sup>th</sup> was a fitting finish to our stay at NWC.

White-bellied Spider Monkey - *Ateles belzebuth* - A troupe of these heard by Papa deep in the forest

from the Tiputini trail on 24<sup>th</sup> produced c.15 showing well, after  
some excellent tracking !! One of the more difficult species here.

Venezuelan Red Howler Monkey - *Alouatta seniculus* - Seen on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> with a maximum  
of 4 including a small infant.

Steve Davis & Karen Baker - 2009.