

Ecuador: 9 – 28 March 2015

I visited Ecuador for the first time for a few weeks in March and decided to dedicate my time to the lowland rainforests around Rio Napo and Yasuni NP and the cloud forest of Tandayapa valley. There are a range of nice primates in this part of the Amazon and of course I also wanted to see the first carnivore being described for 35 years, the Olinguito. Besides, the tropical rainforests teems with wildlife and spending a few more days out there would give me a chance of seeing a few more species.

I was not sure which lodge to choose from along Rio Napo, so I decided to go to Sani Lodge as they have quite a long list of mammals to be seen and it is also a lodge not previously described in any trip report on Mammalwatching.com. I went to the Shiripuno Lodge for its remote location in the Yasuni NP and Bellavista Lodge for the mentioned Olinguito, as I do not know of any other place where they virtually can guarantee sightings of this carnivore.

Sani Lodge: 9 – 16 March

I booked the tour directly with Sani Lodge at www.sanilodge.com and everything worked very well logistically. It is a very well run lodge with comfortable bungalows and a beautiful setting at a lake.



Sani Lodge



Sani Lodge view

My guide was William, a local guide from the Sani community and he was fine. He went to lengths to take me to places to see my key specie. There a plenty of wildlife around the lodge and they will also take you to any place along Rio Napo to find wildlife only or better occurring there as much as you like and at no extra costs. To be able to concentrate on mammal searching a booked a private guide.

I was a bit unfortunate to get the flu already on the plane to Ecuador, but the sheer beauty of the place made it easier to bear the pain. I was a bit unfortunate with the weather also. I did not have one single day with sun, it was quite cold and it rained frequently.

Around the lodge

The first mammal I saw was on the way to the lodge, a group of **Sharp-nosed Bats** sitting under a stick in the lake. I would see them every day at various places in that area.

There are many tracks of various lengths around the lodge. For some you need take the canoe for 20-30 minutes to get to, which is a very nice ride through a wonderful landscape and there were quite a few mammals to see along the way. Almost every day we encountered **Colombian Red Howler Monkeys** high up in the canopy.



Colombian Red Howler Monkey

On 3 days along the river a group of +/- 20 **Common Woolly Monkeys** fed in the low river canopy and on several occasions **Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys**. One early morning a **Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth** climbed the trees when I was on my way to look for Pygmy Marmosets at the community.

The walks around the lodge produced one family of Noisy Night Monkeys very high up in a tree almost only visible with binoculars, some **White-fronted Capuchins** and quite a few Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys.

Just behind the lodge **Graells' Black Mantled Tamarins** were readily spotted, moving very fast through the thicket. Also behind the lodge, **Pygmy Marmosets**, the world's smallest monkey, can be found, but not easily seen and I never saw it there although trying a few times. William recommended us to go to the Sani Community and walk back along Rio Napo for a "secure" sighting. It took us some 30 minutes to find the first lonely individual and 10 minutes later a group of 3. On this walk we also found 1 **Brown-throated 3-toed Sloth** not doing much.

On most nights I did some spotlighting and found some great stuff. On the first night 1 **Kinkajou** walked leisurely down the vines. On another walk we spotted 3 individuals of what I believe is the **White-bellied Slender Mouse Opossum** (if you are of another opinion, please correct me) and on the last night a **Bushy-tailed Olingo** high up in the trees. On that night a rat crossed the path on the forest floor. I will not even try to guess which species it belonged to.

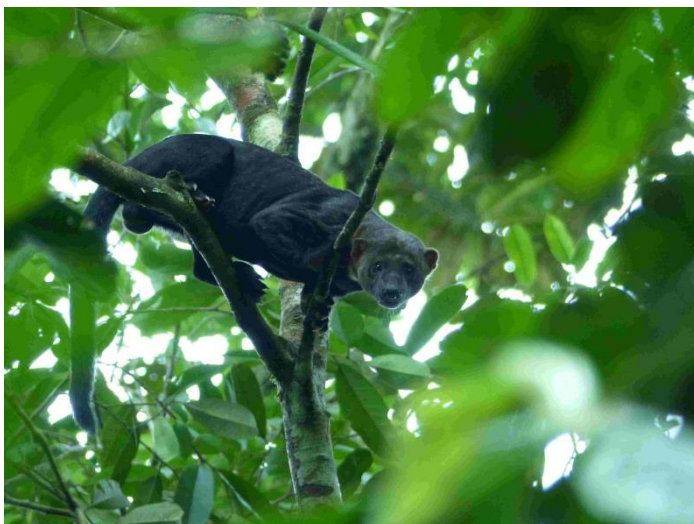


White-bellied Slender Mouse Opossum

Yasuni NP

Some species only occur on the south side of Rio Napo and I went there 3 times, twice inside Yasuni NP and once to the home of William. The goal was to look for the White-bellied Spider Monkey, Equatorial Saki, Golden Mantled Tamarins and Red Titis.

On the first trip to Yasuni I made a short 2.5 hours walk and managed to find a group of 4 **Golden Mantled Tamarins** and a family of 4 Colombian Red Howler Monkeys. On the 2nd go, when I felt better, we took a longer 5 hour walk through a wonderful part of the rainforest and saw a family of 3 **White-bellied Spider Monkeys** at a distance, some more Golden Mantled Tamarins, a group of White-fronted Capuchins travelling together with Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys, as they often do, and 2 very large groups of Common Woolly Monkeys. A very patient **Tayra** stood in a tree staring at us for a few minutes before continuing looking for food, giving me time to both take some photos and to mount my video camera on a tripod and film. I wish all wildlife where that cooperative!



Cooperative Tayra

On the 3rd trip to the south side of Rio Napo my goal was to look for the Red Titi and the elusive Equatorial Saki. We walked for some 4 hours and found yet another family of Golden Mantled Tamarins, some sulking Colombian Red Howler Monkeys, a **South American Coati** and a very fast moving **Red (Double-browed) Titi**. No sign of the Equatorial Saki. That would be my 1st priority at the next station, Shiripuno Lodge.

Shiripuno Lodge: 17 – 22 March

2 days after I paid for Shiripuno Lodge, www.shiripunolodge.com I read a rather negative trip report of the place on Mammalwatching.com and felt ambivalent of going there. If the report referred to the very same lodge I can only guess but it sounded like it. My experience was quite different though and I had a great time and I can recommend the place hands down. The walks were great but it was also nice to glide down the river without any motor and just enjoy the scenery.



To get there you take a taxi for 2 hours and then a 3 to 4 hours boat ride along one of the most beautiful lowland rainforests I have ever seen. The river is seldom wider than 50 meters so you got an excellent intimate view of both sides, which is very different to Rio Napo. As the water level was very high it only took 3 hours. In low water season it usually takes longer. On the way back there had been a landslide, so I had to carry my luggage over a hill where a taxi was waiting for us.

The lodge is more rustic than many lodges you find along Rio Napo, but the rooms are comfortable enough and the food is good. It is quite charming and the setting is great being directly on the riverbank.



Shiripuno Lodge at the riverbank

It made me feel being out in the wild for real. Again I booked a private guide to be able to do my own thing. Miguel, my guide for the 6 days, is not native to the area, but he was prepared to do long hours and he spotted the wildlife quite well and I can recommend him. On most walks a local accompanied us, but did not bring much. He was young and stared mostly at the ground while walking. As Miguel knew the area very well and knew all paths that did not matter much, although, having a local interested guide would for sure have being better.

This part of the Amazon is lower than Rio Napo and due to the high water level some of the paths were not reachable due to the frequent water crossings. A different season might be advantageous.

The place is teeming with primates, especially the Common Woolly Monkey, which I saw on every walk and usually several smaller or larger groups. The Colombian Red Howler Monkeys were frequently spotted both during walks and always along the river. Along the river Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys were also usually easy to see.



Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkey

On 2 separate occasions, once in the forest and once along the river we found small families of shy White-bellied Spider Monkeys and on one occasion on a walk Miguel found the primate that had eluded me so far, the **Equatorial Saki**. He only starred at us for a brief moment before turning his ass to us, but a Saki ass in not the worst to look at. White-fronted Capuchins were also present but not in huge numbers. One day walk also produced a scared 1 **Red Brocket Deer**. During one boat ride I spotted 1 **Sharp-nosed Bat** under a stick.

The night walks were great and added a few new species to my life list. As usual, most of the time you only heard things running away which was frustrating from time to time, but also exciting. The place, I was told, should be good for Spotted Pacas, but as we had not found any on the first few nights, Miguel asked the cook, Nelson, a former hunter, if he knew where to find them. He did. After dinner at around 20.30 he would take us out and show me Paca and Armadillo. 2 hours later we had seen both. The **Spotted Pacas** were close to the lodge and it did not take long time for us to find one, but for the Armadillos we had to walk to the Terra Firma as they are mostly seen in that part. The walk took the better part of an hour or so. We had not walked long on Terra Firma bevor we spotted 1 **Southern Naked-tailed Armadillo** standing in the middle on the trail. On the way back Nelson said he smelled the scent of a feline, but we never saw it. The next night we of course went back to the Terra Firma and on the way a **Common Opossum** crossed our way. We however never got that far as the Terra Firma. In the wetter parts of the forest a **Greater Long-nosed Armadillo** diverged our attention and 4 snakes needed to be taken photos of. As the first Armadillo, he did not stay on for long however, but long enough to identify him.

During 2 of the night walks we also spotted 2 families of Noisy Night Monkeys making their way in the canopy and on one occasion a rat climbed the trees. Again, I will not try to guess which species it belonged to. On the last night, coming back from a tour, a family of 3 **Capybaras** walked behind our accommodation.

Bellavista Lodge: 24 – 26 March

The last 2 nights in Ecuador I spent at the excellent Bellavista Lodge, www.bellavistacloudforest.com to look for the Olinguito. The lodge is conveniently only 2 hours from Quito and they offer pick-up from Quito and will drive you back again. The lodge is very comfortable with excellent rooms and very good food. The lodge is situated in an extremely beautiful cloud forest on the slope of the Andes with an excellent view over the Tandayapa valley. There are many trails to walk along just to enjoy the sights.

But, as I wrote, the reason I went to Bellavista was for the night active **Olinguito**. To encourage them to come close to the lodge they have a banana feeding station. On both nights they came at around 19.00, but not only feeding on bananas but also to have a drink from the Hummingbird feeders. 2 individuals came on the 1st night, 3 on the 2nd.



Olinguito

The real mammal action is around the lodge and not only Olinguitos feast on bananas. **Tayras** came throughout the day for bananas and I saw him on several occasions on both days. The Tayras will climb up to the feeding station if no bananas are on the ground, but unfortunately some were, and I missed that piece of action.



Tayra

The **Red-tailed Squirrels** seems to be common, and no doubt, they liked the bananas too.



Red-tailed Squirrel

Later in the evening, after 22, I was told, an **Andean White-eared Opossum** shows up from time to time and I saw 1 individual on the 2nd night. He was a bit skittish and hid behind leaves for the hour I waited. Maybe it was because of me or he did not like the Olinguito present very much, or he did not care for any of us.



Andean White-eared Opossum

Tube-lipped nectar bats come to drink nectar from the Hummingbird feeders once the Hummers were gone and darkness settled over the valley. There are some more insect eating bats flying around also, but Nelson, my excellent guide, did not know which species as there are as, according to him, around 20 different occurring in the area.

A lovely mammal watching trip was over.

All the best

Torbjörn Lundqvist

Sani Lodge = SAL

Shiripuno Lodge = SHL

Bellavista Lodge = BEL

Species	Latin	Seen where
Colombian Red Howler Monkey	<i>Alouatta seniculus juara</i>	SAL, SHL
Golden Mantled Tamarin	<i>Saguinus tripartitus</i>	SAL
Graells' Black-mantled Tamarin	<i>Saguinus nigricollis graellsii</i>	SAL
Common Woolly Monkey	<i>Lagothrix lagotricha</i>	SAL, SHL
Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkey	<i>Saimiri sciureus macrodon</i>	SAL, SHL
Kinkajou	<i>Potos flavus</i>	SAL
Sharp-nosed Bat	<i>Rhynchonycteris naso</i>	SAL, SHL
Noisy Night Monkey	<i>Aotus vociferans</i>	SAL, SHL
Red (Double-browed) Titi	<i>Callicebus discolor</i>	SAL
South American Coati	<i>Nasua nasua</i>	SAL
Tayra	<i>Eira barbara</i>	SAL, BEL
White-throated Capuchin	<i>Cebus capucinus capucinus</i>	SAL, SHL
White-bellied Spider Monkey	<i>Ateles belzebuth</i>	SAL, SHL
Brown-throated 3-toed sloth	<i>Bradypus variegatus</i>	SAL
Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth	<i>Choloepus hoffmanni</i>	SAL
Pygmy Marmoset	<i>Callithrix pygmaea</i>	SAL
Red Brocket Deer	<i>Mazama americana</i>	SHL

Capybara	<i>Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris</i>	SHL
Bushy-tailed Olingo	<i>Bassaricyon gabbii</i>	SAL
Equatorial Saki	<i>Pithecia aequatorialis</i>	SHL
Spotted Paca	<i>Cuniculus paca</i>	SHL
Southern Naked-tailed Armadillo	<i>Cabassous unicinctus</i>	SHL
Greater Long-nosed Armadillo	<i>Dasypus kappleri</i>	SHL
Common Opossum	<i>Didelphis marsupialis</i>	SHL
Olinguito	<i>Bassaricyon neblina</i>	BEL
Red-tailed Squirrel	<i>Sciurus granatensis</i>	BEL
Tube-lipped nectar bat	<i>Anoura fistulata</i>	BEL
Andean White-eared Opossum	<i>Didelphis pernigra</i>	BEL
White-bellied Slender Mouse Opossum	<i>Marmosops noctivagus</i>	BEL