

## ECUADOR

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*Text and photos by Brendan Fogarty*



*Spectacled Bear, Bellavista Lodge. All photos by Brendan Fogarty.*

This trip was built around birds primarily, minus one notable exception. We were certainly interested in all mammals we came across and documented all that we could. It was about two weeks in total, spanning both sides of the Andes and a foray into the Amazon (see last map for a rough map). Juan Carlos was our guide for the first week, after which only Brent and I stayed and went to the Amazon. I'll only note the mammal highlights below.

We flew into Quito and worked our way west into the upper reaches of the Choco rainforest. Our first mammal came to us in highest reaches of the western slopes: an **Andean Tapeti** (Cottontail) at Reserva Yanacocha by the main building.

Our first lodging was Bellavista Lodge. It is famous for having the recently described Olinguito, which come into a fruit feeder at night. Sadly we didn't have any come in either night, but we did have two **Kinkajous** in their place. A pair of **Tayra** visited the bird feeding area - they seemed like regulars too. A major mammal highlight occurred here

after a long morning of hiking the hilly trails here, a young **Spectacled Bear** investigating the compost pile. It's thought that it separated from its mother a little too early and is leaning on these scraps in her place. Thankfully this place is pretty remote so hopefully it won't intrude on too many other properties. We watched it snag a few vegetables and some pasta before retreating up a tree for a nap.

We continued on there to nearby Mindo and the Amagusa Reserve. There weren't many mammals of note. At Paz de las Aves (the famous antpitta spot) we encountered a few mice that iNat suggests are **Pygmy Rice Rats** stumbling boldly about across a path in the middle of the day. On our return no more than an hour later we encountered at least one that had perished, unclear why. There were a few charming **Western Dwarf Squirrels** at Amagusa, a big highlight.



*Western Dwarf Squirrel, Reserva Amagusa.*

We returned to Quito. We visited Parque Nacional Antisana for the morning before working our way over Papallacta Pass and descending the eastern slopes of the Andes. Our next mammals of note came from San Isidro Lodge, which had **Black Paca** sniffing around the bird feeding area at night. They sometimes have a tapir come in at night and have night monkeys on the property but we struck out with those on our single night there. A walk primarily for owls yielded a larger **bat** that was visibly visiting a fruiting tree and landing in it briefly to snack.

Next we stayed at WildSumaco Lodge for two nights. It rained pretty much every minute that the sun was below horizon (but not above!) so no night attempts. But in the day we encountered a few mammals. **Black-mantled Tamarin** was seen well, and on an afternoon hike we stumbled upon a coati. I didn't get a great look but I think by range it must have been **South American Coati** and not Mountain, although I think our guide may have indicated otherwise.

We spent almost half of the following day traveling to Coca and getting on a boat to our next destination, an ecolodge on the Rio Napo just before Nuevo Rocafuerte called Sacha Ñampi. This was the only place we stayed which was off the beaten birding path. We didn't have any mammals on the way which is not surprising as the river is pretty busy for a lot of its length in Ecuador. I believe we heard some **Colombian Red Howler Monkeys** on an

afternoon walk once we arrived, and also saw some large cat tracks and Giant Armadillo holes, which are ubiquitous in the region, but the highlight was a small troop of **Golden-mantle Saddleback Tamarin**. In the evening, there were a large number of bats visible. I was only able to photograph some large type of **fruit-eating bat**. Perhaps the real highlight was the large **mouse** that terrorized our room that night. Will it be kicked out of the group if I admit that I was so focused on extricating it that I didn't get a photo?



*Lesser Sac-winged Bats, Sacha Ñampi Lodge.*

The next morning was one of the most anticipated of the trip, for birds and mammals alike. It started by noticing our thatched cottage was home to another species of mammal, a small group of **Lesser Sac-winged Bats** residing under the eaves outside. Then we got in another powered canoe and sped down the river, past Neuvo Rocafuerte. Shortly after the town there is a river that leads south into Yasuni National Park, just meters from the border with Peru. But we continued past it down the Rio Napo, alternating in Peruvian and Ecuadorian waters, until we finally came to the last portion of Ecuador. On a side river we parked at Yaku Warmi, a little village with a small and basic tourist center. There was a free-roaming young **Woolly Monkey** named Martin who had been orphaned and became part of the local community. It was amazing to see him playing with a local child as if they were brothers.

The main attraction of Yaku Warmi, in my opinion, and one of the main reasons we came this far and stayed at Sacha Ñampi, was the chance to see **Boto** up close. There are a few individuals who visit this remote dock for fish. They are not always around, but as we disembarked we realized they were indeed already on site, surfacing briefly. We ended up with amazing looks. There's certainly concerns to be had with feeding animals in general, but this relationship felt relatively healthy. They were incredible and the only ones we saw on the trip (no Tucuxi either).



*Boto, Yaku Warmi.*

On the way back we dipped into Yasuni National Park. We went for a nice hike that brought us to one of the remote lagoons (featuring tapir tracks), which was one of the most magical little ecosystems I have ever seen. We explored it and then a second lagoon as the sun set. We saw a few groups of **howler monkeys** along the river and a **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth**. At twilight an impressive number of **bats** began foraging over the water and trees. I couldn't determine if any were anything beyond the large fruit-eating types I had photographed. I didn't see any fishing, for example.

The next day we transferred to our final lodging of the trip, Sani Lodge. This lovely resort is about halfway back to Coca. Many of the mammals here seem to be more used to people than farther down the river. On the way in we had **Humboldt's Squirrel Monkey**, which also visit a large fruit feeder. There was yet another pair of **Tayra** visiting this too. A stick protruding out of the lagoon very close to the Sani welcome dock had a small group of lovely **Proboscis Bats**. The next morning we started at the unbelievable canopy tower, which is essentially a set of stairs going up about 120 feet to a platform which is cradled in the top of a massive Ceiba tree. Our guide spotted a **Pygmy Marmoset** and judged us when we promptly lost it when we became distracted by some bird activity. Don't ban me.

Our guide took us to a closer section of Yasuni National Park (which is utterly enormous) and we went for a walk there. We never saw them but we heard well some **White-tailed Titis** well. Our last new addition of the trip was some type of **mouse opossum** which was seen briefly on our way in the morning gloom of our last day.

We ended up with a total of no fewer than 21 taxa seen, including the wild but habituated Woolly Monkey, and physical evidence of at least three more. Families and names in the following table are from iNaturalist. Additionally, we had 653 species of birds, 13 taxa of reptiles, no fewer than 69 documented species of butterflies, and of course various other insects and plants that caught our eye.



*Mouse opossum sp., Sani Lodge.*

Family	Scientific Name	English Name
Phyllostomidae	Phyllostomidae	New World Leaf-nosed Bats
Emballonuridae	Saccopteryx leptura	Lesser Sac-winged Bat
Emballonuridae	Rhynchonycteris naso	Proboscis Bat
Iniidae	Inia geoffrensis	Boto
Tapiridae	Tapirus terrestris	South American Tapir (tracks)
Felidae	Felidae	Felid (tracks)
Ursidae	Tremarctos ornatus	Spectacled Bear
Procyonidae	Nasua nasua	South American Coati
Procyonidae	Potos flavus	Kinkajou
Mustelidae	Eira barbara	Tayra
Didelphidae	Marmosa	Mouse Opossums
Callitrichidae	Saguinus tripartitus	Golden-mantle Saddleback Tamarin
Callitrichidae	Saguinus nigricollis	Black-mantled Tamarin
Callitrichidae	Cebuella pygmaea	Pygmy Marmoset
Atelidae	Alouatta seniculus	Colombian Red Howler Monkey
Atelidae	Lagothrix lagothricha	Common Woolly Monkey (partially wild)
Cebidae	Saimiri cassiquiarensis	Squirrel Monkey
Dasyproctidae	Dasyprocta fuliginosa	Black Agouti

Cricetidae	Oligoryzomys	Pygmy Rice Rats
Sciuridae	Microsciurus mimulus	Western Dwarf Squirrel
Sciuridae	Sciurus granatensis	Red-tailed Squirrel
Bradypodidae	Bradypus variegatus	Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth
Chlamyphoridae	Priodontes maximus	Giant Armadillo (holes)
Pitheciidae	Plecturocebus discolor	White-tailed Titi
Leporidae	Sylvilagus andinus	Andean Tapeti
Cebidae	Saimiri cassiquiarensis	Humboldt's Squirrel Monkey

Images of all documented mammals, reptiles, fish, insects, etc can be seen in this iNat Project:

[https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?project\\_id=ecuador-2024&place\\_id=any&verifiable=any](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?project_id=ecuador-2024&place_id=any&verifiable=any)

Birds and photos can be seen here:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/261798>

Snapshot of iNat map to give a sense of the breadth of our journey.

