

**ECUADOR: TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP
OCTOBER 24–27, 2017**



Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan

©Paul J. Greenfield

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By Paul Greenfield



Flame-faced Tanager

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Northwestern Ecuador offers an exceptional experience for wildlife enthusiasts, and its birdlife is hard to beat! This Tandayapa pre-trip experience is meant to provide an introduction to Ecuador's rich biodiversity while offering a backdrop, contrast, and comparison to the main Galapagos Cruise and the archipelago's unique and relatively stark ecosystems. The Tandayapa-Mindo-Milpe region we visited is one of color and variety, and although a short three-day visit might seem too brief to those who are unfamiliar with the region, I can only comment that "the real proof is indeed in the pudding," as the old saying goes.

In a rather easygoing manner, we managed to see a lot, initiating our experience full-on at Pacha Quindi, a local "classic" and one of many fine birding gardens that have sprung up over the years in this bird-rich haven. From the get-go, we were surrounded by a blur of frantic wings from 16 hummingbird species, among them: Brown, Lesser, and Sparkling vireos, Violet-tailed Sylph, Brown and Collared incas, Buff-tailed Coronet, (White) Booby

Racket-tail, Rufous-gaped Hillstar, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Fawn-breasted and Empress brilliants, Purple-throated Woodstar, and Andean Emerald. Before departing, a soaring Barred Hawk, a Crimson-rumped Toucanet, and pairs of Golden and Golden-naped tanagers paid us a visit. We continued on our way along the quiet '*Paseo del Quinde*' Ecoroute and made a brief but birdy stop at Bellavista Cloud-Forest Lodge, perched high-up on a forested ridge; more, and at least one different (Tawny-bellied Hermit) hummingbirds entertained us as we sipped coffee, tea, and hot chocolate, followed by great looks at a very obliging Toucan Barbet that blessed us with its visit—this is indeed one of Ecuador's stellar species—along with an out-of-range Red-faced Spinetail, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Black-and-white Becard, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (at our feet!), Russet-crowned Warbler, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Rufous-chested Tanager, and a pair of Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers, among other species. We then advanced through thick fog—where “what-should-be” a spectacular Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan came to check us out at one spot, showing only as a pale, hazy gray shape overhead in the dense brume...well, that's cloud-forest for you. We planned to return to this road for more on our last morning. We eventually arrived, now below the clouds but in the rain, at our final destination, Séptimo Paraíso Lodge. After settling in we did some “wet” afternoon birding among euphonias, saltators, and a tanager or two, and even more hummingbirds at their sheltered feeding station: White-necked Jacobin, White-whiskered Hermit, Green-crowned Brilliant, and Crowned Woodnymph were among the additions to our day's list.

Our following morning initiated with a pre-breakfast walk around Séptimo Paraíso where we enjoyed Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Ornate Flycatcher, and Black-winged Saltator among many other “firsts”; after breakfast we paid a visit to nearby Milpe Bird Sanctuary for a busy morning complete with Squirrel Cuckoo, Green-crowned Brilliant, Crowned Woodnymph, Red-headed Barbet, Chestnut-mandibled (Yellow-throated) Toucan, Wedge-billed and Spotted woodcreepers, Buff-fronted and Scaly-throated foliage-gleaners, spectacular displaying Club-winged Manakins (with their incredible “singing” wing-lifts!), Tropical Parula, Chocó Warbler, Yellow-throated Chlorospingus, and Ochre-breasted Tanager. Our return to Séptimo for a filling lunch and some R&R—and an optional bird walk where we unsuccessfully chased the call of a Scaled Fruiteater and spied a distant Wattled Guan—was followed by a mid-afternoon visit to what I like to call “Casa Rolando” located about five minutes away. Here, a local resident transformed his forested yard, just off the main highway, into a lovely birding *hot-spot* for visitors to enjoy. An attractive fountain where hummingbirds bathe, plantain bananas placed out tastefully amongst the trees and vegetation, and a separate hummingbird garden overlooking the Mindo Valley set the stage for the vibrant birding experience we enjoyed—Tawny-bellied Hermit; Velvet-purple Coronet; Empress Brilliant; Ecuadorian Thrush; White-lined, Palm, Black-capped, and Flame-faced tanagers; Buff-throated Saltator; and Dusky Chlorospingus were just a few of the species we admired point-blank.

The following morning we departed via the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute towards Quito. A spectacular Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan was among the first species we encountered, this time with clear skies and in full vibrant color...Wow! We searched for a flock of Red-billed Parrots that we watched fly into the canopy of a nearby tree only to remain hidden as they called and perched; Green-and-black Fruiteater, Glossy-black Thrush, more Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers, a stunning Beryl-spangled Tanager, and Capped Conebills also were encountered. We took a field lunch-break at Quinde Luna, yet another local birding garden, and thrilled to great views of a fine calling male Golden-headed Quetzal along with a final

review of the region's hummingbirds at the active nectar feeders set up there. It was time to head to our hotel in the Andean highland town of Puenbo, near the international airport, where we settled in and met for a final checklist session and our farewell dinner. With fond memories and photos of our Andean experience, our minds began to focus on the Galapagos cruise that beckoned.

ITINERARY

October 25—Morning drive to Tandayapa Valley and the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute; hummingbird-watching at Pacha Quindi; after a field lunch there, continuing along the Ecoroute to Bellavista Cloud Forest Lodge for a coffee/hummingbird break. We continued along the Ecoroute in heavy fog, arriving mid-afternoon at Séptimo Paraíso Lodge; some afternoon birding in the rain at Séptimo (overnight at Séptimo Paraíso)

October 26—Pre-breakfast walk around Séptimo Paraíso grounds; mid-morning at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; lunch and midday at Séptimo Paraíso; pleasant afternoon visit at “Casa Rolando” aka ‘San Tadeo Birding’ (overnight at Séptimo Paraíso)

October 27—Morning departure from Séptimo Paraíso”; birding along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute with a return stop at Bellavista and Quinde Luna. Return drive to the small Andean town of Puenbo; farewell dinner at Rincón de Puenbo (overnight at Rincón de Puenbo)

BIRDS

GUANS, CHACHALACAS & CURASSOWS: CRACIDAE

Wattled Guan (*Aburria aburri*)—Heard daily (haunting song) then 1 was seen at a distance; at Séptimo Paraíso

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNS: ARDEIDAE

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)—Numerous; flocks were observed overflying Séptimo Paraíso, to and from their roosting sites, daily

NEW WORLD VULTURES: CATHARTIDAE

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)—Generally common throughout Ecuador—several were seen daily at a few sites

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aurea*)—As with the previous species, generally fairly common throughout Ecuador—smaller numbers were seen daily at a few sites

KITES, EAGLES & HAWKS: ACCIPITRIDAE

Barred Hawk (*Morphnarchus princeps*)—1 soaring bird was seen over Pacha Quindi

Roadside Hawk (*Rupornis magnirostris*)—Only 1 seen along the Ecoroute on our last day

PIGEONS & DOVES: COLUMBIDAE

Plumbeous Pigeon (*Patagioenas plumbea*)—Only 1 was seen perched along the Ecoroute

White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*)—3 were seen; 1 at Pacha Quindi on our first day, 2 on our final day along the Ecoroute
Eared Dove (*Zenaida auriculata*)—Generally common around Quito and more open areas in the highlands

CUCKOOS: CUCULIDAE

Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*)—1 was seen in canopy at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

SWIFTS: APODIDAE

White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*)—6-8 were seen along the Ecoroute on our last morning

HUMMINGBIRD: TROCHILIDAE

White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*)—Rather common low-elevation species; 6 or so seen daily and at most feeder sites, except Bellavista

White-whiskered Hermit (*Phaethornis yaruqui*)—1-2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe

Tawny-bellied Hermit (*Phaethornis syrmatorphorus*)—Singles seen at Bellavista and Casa Rolando (Corky) feeders

Brown Violetear (*Colibri delphinae*)—2 or 3 were seen daily Pacha Quindi, Séptimo Paraíso Casa Luna and Quinde Luna

Lesser Violetear (*Colibri cyanotus*)—This population is now split from Green Violetear (*C. thalassinus*). 5 or so were seen at Pacha Quindi and Bellavista; 2 more at Quinde Luna Casa

Sparkling Violetear (*Colibri coruscans*)—3 seen at Pacha Quindi: 2 more at Quinde Luna

Green Thorntail (*Discosura conversii*)—Only 2 (1 male, 1 female) were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Speckled Hummingbird (*Adelomyia melanogenys*)—About 10 were seen at Pacha Quinde and Bellavista; 2 at Casa Rolando; also a few at Quinde Luna

Violet-tailed Sylph (*Agelaiocercus coelestis*)—Many spectacular males and several females were seen at Pacha Quindi, Bellavista, Séptimo Paraíso, Casa Rolando and Quinde Luna

Brown Inca (*Coeligena wilsoni*)—1-3 or so were seen daily at Pacha Quindi, Séptimo Paraíso, Casa Rolando and Quinde Luna

Collared Inca (*Coeligena torquata*)—3-4 in all; seen at Pacha Quindi, and Bellavista mainly

Buff-tailed Coronet (*Boissonneaua flavescens*)—Common in subtropics mainly, with its wing-lifting, cinnamon 'wing-pits', buff tail and brilliant chartreuse face. From 6-10 or more seen daily; most numerous at Bellavista

Velvet-purple Coronet (*Boissonneaua jardini*)—So beautiful! 6 or so seen at Casa Rolando; 3-4 more at Quinde Luna

Booted Racket-tail (*Ocreatus underwoodii*)—May soon be split and called White-booted Racket-tail. Rather common (between 6-10 or so seen) daily

Rufous-gaped Hillstar (*Urochroa bourgueri*)—Formally lumped with White-tailed Hillstar of Eastern Andean slope. 1 seen repeatedly at Pacha Quindi woodshed.

Purple-bibbed Whitetip (*Urostitte benjamini*)—Fairly common on three days, at Pacha Quindi, Séptimo Paraíso, Casa Rolando, Milpe Bird Sanctuary and Quinde Luna

Fawn-breasted Brilliant (*Heliodoxa rubinoides*)—Common in the región; between 8-15 or so seen daily at most sites

Green-crowned Brilliant (*Heliodoxa jacula*)—Common, mainly at Séptimo Paraíso, and

Milpe feeders, also 1 seen at Quinde Luna

Empress Brilliant (*Heliodoxa imperatrix*)—1-2 of this rare and local Chocó bioregional endemic were seen at Pacha Quindi, Casa Rolando and Quinde Luna

Purple-throated Woodstar (*Calliflox mitchellii*)—6 or so were seen at Pacha Quindi; 2 more were encountered at Quinde Luna

Crowned Woodnymph (*Thalurania colombica*)—Previously considered a separate species, Green-crowned Woodnymph (*T. fannyi*), but has recently been lumped with Purple-crowned Woodnymph. This lower elevation species, with incredibly stunning males) was seen at feeders at Milpe (7-8), Séptimo Paraíso and Casa Rolando (10 or so) and also at Quinde Luna (4-5)

Andean Emerald (*Amazilia franciae*)—6-8 were seen at Pacha Quindi, Séptimo Paraíso, Milpe and Casa Rolando; several more seen at Quinde Luna

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (*Amazilia tzacatl*)—A common lowland species in western Ecuador, though not that many seen this trip; from 4-8 or so were seen at Pacha Quindi, Séptimo Paraíso, Casa Rolando, Milpe and Quinde Luna

TROGONS & QUETZALS: TROGONIDAE

Golden-headed Quetzal (*Pharomachrus auriceps*)—Finally, 1 calling male was seen at Quinde Luna

Chocó Trogon (*Trogon comptus*)—Aka Blue-tailed Trogon by some authors. Heard only at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; a Chocó bioregional endemic

Masked Trogon (*Trogon personatus*)—1 male was encountered along the Ecoroute

BARBETS: CAPITONIDAE

Red-headed Barbet (*Eubucco bourcierii*)— 2 males were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

TOUCAN-BARBETS: SEMNORNITHIDAE

Toucan Barbet (*Semnornis ramphastinus*)—1 of this multicolored, Chocó bioregional *flagship* species came in close at Bellavista Cloud Forest Lodge

TOUCANS: RAMPHASTIDAE

Crimson-rumped Toucanet (*Aulocorhynchus haematopygius*)—1 came down to plantain feeders at Pacha Quindi

Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan (*Andigena laminirostris*)—1 of this emblematic Chocó bioregional endemic species was seen in thick fog along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute on our first afternoon; then a second sighting on our last day involved an obliging male that came in and sat for us in the canopy along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute

Chestnut-mandibled Toucan (*Ramphastos swainsonii*)—Considered a race by some authors, together with Black-mandibled Toucan (*R. ambiguus*), and then called Yellow-throated Toucan (*R. ambiguus*). 2 were seen well at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

PARROTS & MACAWS: PSITTACIDAE

Red-billed Parrot (*Pionus sordidus*)—8 were seen in flight, perched in the canopy of a not too distant tree, but could not be relocated by any of us, aside from Karen; this along the Ecoroute

ANTHRUSHES: FORMICARIIDAE

Rufous-breasted Anthrush (*Formicarius rufipectus*)—Heard only on our second morning at

Séptimo Paraíso

OVENBIRDS & WOODCREEPERS: FURNARIIDAE

- Plain-brown Woodcreeper (*Dendrocincla fuliginosa*)—A pair was seen at Séptimo Paraíso (plain with dark malar stripe and light-colored cheek)
- Wedge-billed Woodcreeper (*Glyphorhynchus spirurus*)—2 were seen at Milpe (small size and tiny, wedge-shaped bill)
- Spotted Woodcreeper (*Xiphorhynchus erythropygius*)—4 were seen with mixed foraging flocks at Milpe Bird Sanctuary (fairly large with a heavier, rather straight bill)
- Montane Woodcreeper (*Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger*)—2 were seen at Bellavista
- Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner (*Philydor rufum*)—A pair were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary
- Scaly-throated Foliage-Gleaner (*Anabacerthia variagaticeps*)—2 were seen well with a mixed foraging flock at Milpe
- Red-faced Spinetail (*Cranioleuca erythropis*)—1 was seen foraging at Bellavista (very high elevation for the species!); another was seen at Casa Rolando

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: TYRANNIDAE

- White-tailed Tyrannulet (*Mecocerculus poecilocercus*)—3 were seen with mixed foraging flocks at Bellavista and along the Ecoroute
- Slay-capped Flycatcher (*Leptopogon suoperciliaris*)—4 were seen with mixed species flocks at Milpe
- Ornate Flycatcher** (*Myiobittacus ornatus*)—2-3 of this charming little flycatcher were seen at Séptimo Paraíso on two days
- Cinnamon Flycatcher** (*Pyrrhomyias cinnamomeus*)—Another charming flycatcher; 4 were seen perched at point blank range at Bellavista
- Smoke-colored Pewee (*Contopus fumigatus*)—A pair was seen on two visits to Bellavista
- Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*)—1 was seen by Corky along the Ecoroute
- Golden-crowned Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes chrysocephalus*)—1 were observed at Bellavista
- Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)—Only 2 were seen on our last morning along the Ecoroute

COTINGAS: COTINGIDAE

- Green-and-black Fruiteater (*Pipreola riefferii*)—1 was seen only briefly in canopy along the Ecoroute
- Scaled Fruiteater (*Ampelioides tschudii*)—Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso, right above us, in such tall canopy, that we could never see it
- Andean Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*)—Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso

MANAKINS: PIPRIDAE

- Club-winged Manakin** (*Machaeropterus deliciosus*)—2 displaying males were seen, one especially obliging (so cool!) at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

TITYRAS & ALLIES: TITYRIDAE

- Black-and-white Becard (*Pachyramphus albogriseus*)—1 was seen at Bellavista; a pair was encountered at Milpe Bird Sanctuary
- One-colored Becard (*Pachyramphus homochrous*)—1 female was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

SWALLOWS: HIRUNDINIDAE

Blue-and-white Swallow (*Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*)—Usually fairly common; 8 or so were seen on our last day

WRENS: TROGLODYTIDAE

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorhina leucophrys*)—Mostly heard only; 1 was seen well in, almost at our feet, at Bellavista

THRUSHES & ALLIES: TURDIDAE

Andean Solitaire (*Myadestes ralloides*)—Heard only along the Ecoroute

Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*)—2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Ecuadorian Thrush (*Turdus maculirostris*)—1 seen repeatedly at Casa Rolando feeders, 'also heard there and at Séptimo Paraíso

Great Thrush (*Turdus fuscater*)—Generally common highland species, especially in Quito; only 1 was seen near Quito, by Corky

Glossy-black Thrush (*Turdus serranus*)—1-2 were seen on our first and last days, along the Ecoroute

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: PARULIDAE

Tropical Parula (*Setophaga pitiayumi*)—2 were seen; at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Blackburnian Warbler (*Setophaga fusca*)—Only 1 was seen at Bellavista on our return visit; apparently the main wintering population had not arrived yet

Chocó Warbler (*Myiothlypis chlorophrys*)—Considered a race of Golden-bellied Warbler (*M. chrysogaster*) by some authors, though voices are totally different and ranges are totally separate. A pair was seen with a mixed foraging flock at Milpe

Russet-crowned Warbler (*Myiothlypis coronata*)—2-3 were seen close-by at Bellavista on our first; another was seen there on our return visit

Slate-throated Whitestart (*Myioborus miniatus*)—Also called 'Redstart' by many authors though the species shows NO red! Only 1-2 were seen this trip, at Bellavista and Séptimo Paraíso

TANAGERS & ALLIES: THRAUPIDAE

Rufous-chested Tanager (*Thlypopsis ornata*)—1 was seen (in canopy) at Bellavista

White-lined Tanager (*Tachyphonus rufus*)—A pair was seen a few times at Casa Rolando feeders

Lemon-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus icteronotus*)—Considered a race of Flame-rumped Tanager (*R. flammigerus*) by some authors. A common species of the western lowlands; many seen at Séptimo Paraíso, Casa Rolando and Milpe

Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager (*Anisognathus somptuosus*)—Seen on all three days; best at Bellavista néctar feeders, but also seen well along the Ecoroute, etc.

Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*)—Several were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe

Bird Sanctuary

Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*)—only 2 were seen this trip, at Casa Rolando

Golden-naped Tanager (*Tangara ruficervix*)—2 were seen at Plantain feeder at Pacha Quindi; another was seen at Casa Rolando

Black-capped Tanager (*Tangara heinei*)—A lovely pair was seen a couple of times at Casa Rolando plantain feeders

Beryl-spangled Tanager (*Tangara nigroviridis*)—So beautiful; 4 in all were seen in canopy

along the Ecoroute, but the last 1 was in excellent light!

Flame-faced Tanager (*Tangara parzudakii*)—A pair was seen at Casa Rolando; another was seen at Quide Luna

Golden Tanager (*Tangara arthus*)—Seen daily; 2 at Pacha Quindi; 5 or so at Casa Rolando, also at Séptimo Paraíso, Milpe and Quinde Luna

Silver-throated Tanager (*Tangara icterocephala*)—1 seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Green Honeycreeper (*Chlorophanes spiza*)—Single males were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Capped Conebill (*Conirostrum albifrons*)—1 male was seen with a mixed foraging flock along the Ecoroute (remember constant tail flicking)

White-sided Flowerpiercer (*Diglossa albilatera*)—1 male was seen in flowering shrubs at Pacha Quindi; a pair was seen at Bellavista

Masked Flowerpiercer (*Diglossa cyanea*)—1 or so came in close to nectar feeders at Bellavista; at least 6 were seen along the Ecoroute

Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus plegejus*)—1 was seen perched near the Calacalí gas station on our first morning

Variable Seedeater (*Sporophila corvina*)—1 male sat at the dining room window, checking himself out, at Séptimo Paraíso

Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*)—2 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Buff-throated Saltator (*Saltator maximus*)—Only 1 was seen at Casa Rolando feeders

Black-winged Saltator (*Saltator atripennis*)—1 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso; another was encountered at Casa Rolando

BUNTINGS & NEW WORLD SPARROWS: EMBERIZIDAE

Yellow-throated Chlorospingus (*Chlorospingus semifuscus*)—Formally called 'Bush-Tanager', but no longer considered a member of the tanager family. 10 were seen with a mixed foraging flock at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Dusky Chlorospingus (*Chlorospingus semifuscus*)—Formally called 'Bush-Tanager', but no longer considered a member of the tanager family. 1 or 2 seen along the Ecoroute. This species is a Chocó bioregional endemic

Chestnut-capped Brushfinch (*Arremon brunneinucha*)—A pair was seen well foraging along the walkway at Bellavista

Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*)—Common species throughout the Andes; a few, at least, were seen on all three days

CARDINALS & ALLIES: CARDINALIDAE

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)—No longer considered a tanager according to DNA. 1 female was seen on our last afternoon along the Ecoroute

Ochre-breasted Tanager (*Chlorothraupis stolzmanni*)—A dull species! No longer considered a tanager according to DNA. 3 were seen with a mixed foraging flock at Milpe

Golden Grosbeak (*Pheucticus chrysogaster*)—Formally called Southern Yellow-Grosbeak. A male and female were seen along the Ecoroute on our first afternoon

FINCHES, EUPHONIAS & ALLIES: FRINGILLIDAE

Thick-billed Euphonia (*Euphonia lanirostris*)—Fairly common, especially at feeders at Casa Rolando; also 1 was seen by Corky at Quinde Luna

Orange-bellied Euphonia (*Euphonia xanthogaster*)—1 male was seen at Bellavista; 3 were

seen at Casa Rolando

MAMMALS

SQUIRRELS: SCIURIDAE

Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*)—Only 1 was seen at Pacha Quindi

We also saw a typically huge Andean earthworm...worth noting!