

TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP TO GALAPAGOS CRUISE

November 5–6, 2010

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TOUR REPORT
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By Paul Greenfield

Our Tandayapa Pre-trip was not only a great way to prepare for our Galapagos Cruise, but was an exciting introduction to the Neotropics and an especially tantalizing peek at South America's incredible avian diversity. Ecuador may well be one of this continent's best kept secrets, and what a pleasant way to discover it. This year we created a two-day trip to the famous Tandayapa-Mindo region, allowing time to get adjusted to travel mode and at the same time providing an excellent opportunity to get a feel for the Neotropics and build a base for comparison between a highland area on the continent and one in the Galapagos—superficially somewhat similar, but species-wise like two separate planets!

Our first stop on day one was at the gardens of VENT leader Tony Nunnery; he and his wife Barbara own a beautiful property in the upper Tandayapa Valley where they have been feeding hummingbirds for years. Even with the dry spell this area has been experiencing over the past few weeks, which resulted in a supposedly “low” species count, we witnessed a spectacular hummingbird show.

After having been sufficiently dazzled by a flashing prism of colors, we headed off along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute, a country road managed by the local community for birders and nature lovers, to search out some of the hundreds of bird species that inhabit this wonderful cloudforest. We made a stop at Bellavista Cloud Forest Lodge at the ridge-top and enjoyed another busy hummingbird show—we were already getting pretty spoiled by this time. By mid-afternoon we arrived at our final destination, the excellent Sachatamia Lodge, where yet another blaze of hummers met us—was this overkill? We had tallied 20 species of these spectacular jewels, mostly all seen closely and repeatedly, including specialties like Western Emerald, Empress Brilliant, Velvet-purple Coronet, Brown and Collared incas, Gorgeted Sunangel, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Booted Racket-tail, Violet-tailed Sylph, and Purple-throated Woodstar. It would be unfair not to mention non-hummer sightings that made our day, to the tune of Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, Powerful Woodpecker, Turquoise Jay, and Grass-green and Golden-naped tanagers, just to name a few species.

The following morning we were up and out early for a pre-breakfast birding extravaganza right around the Sachatamia grounds—actually it couldn't have been easier. A few “street-lights” set up by the main lodge building act like moth and insect magnets throughout the night and at dawn become spectacular stages for a varied selection of birds that seem absolutely fearless as they feed intently and allow perfect viewing. After a very satisfying episode of woodcreepers, flycatchers, manakins, vireos, tanagers, brush-finches, and euphonias we broke for breakfast and a return to the hummingbird show we left the day before; the feeders were buzzing! Sachatamia is perfectly located close to several top birding areas, and after breakfast we decided to visit the Mindo valley entrance road where the highlight was a beautiful male Golden-headed Quetzal that allowed us to scope it from every angle possible.

We then returned to the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute for a couple of hours to pick up species we had missed the day before. We came across a few mixed foraging flocks and worked our way back to

Sachatamia for lunch and more birding around the grounds before heading off in the afternoon for our return to Quito.

This pre-trip gave us an opportunity to experience the riches of Ecuador's northwestern Andean slopes and prepare us for a truly inspiring week in one of the most incredible places on Earth—the Galapagos Islands.

ITINERARY

November 5 –Morning drive to Tandayapa Valley and to Pacha Quinde (Tony and Barbara's property); continuing along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute to Sachatamia Lodge, with a brief stop at Bellavista Lodge (night at Sachatamia)

November 6—Morning at Sachatamia, the lower Ecoroute and the upper Mindo entrance road; afternoon return to Quito

THE SPECIES LIST

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERN: ARDEIDAE

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)—Groups of 8 and 5 were seen at Sachatamia on both days

NEW WORLD VULTURES: CATHARTIDAE

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)—Generally very common throughout Ecuador—only 3 were seen over Sachatamia

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aurea*)—As previous species, generally very common throughout Ecuador—only 3 were seen over Sachatamia

KITES, EAGLES & HAWKS: ACCIPITRIDAE

Roadside Hawk (*Buteo polyosoma*)—2 were seen on 6 November around Sachatamia

PIGEONS & DOVES: COLUMBIDAE

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)—Common in areas in and around Quito and other towns

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*)—6 in all were seen, along the Ecoroute over the two days

Plumbeous Pigeon (*Patagioenas plumbea*)—Heard only on both days

Eared Dove (*Zenaida auriculata*)—Generally common around Quito and more open areas

White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*)—1 juvenile bird was seen in the gardens at Pacha Quinde

White-throated Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon frenata*)—Heard only along the Ecoroute on both days

PARROTS & MACAWS: PSITTACIDAE

Barred Parakeet (*Bolborhynchus lineola*)—heard only, high overhead along the Ecoroute on 6 Nov.

Red-billed Parrot (*Pionus sordidus*)—Flocks making up 56 birds were seen on the 5th; at

least 8 were seen on the 6th; at Sachatamia

HUMMINGBIRD: TROCHILIDAE

Tawny-bellied Hermit (*Phaethornis syrmatorphorus*)—At least 1 bird was seen well on both days at Sachatamia feeders

Green Violetear (*Colibri thalassinus*)—At least 2 were seen well at Pacha Quinde feeders

Sparkling Violetear (*Colibri coruscans*)—4 were seen at Pacha Quinde feeders; also the common hummer in the Quito area

Western Emerald (*Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus*)—1 stunning male fed on *verbena* flowers at Pacha Quinde. This population has often been considered a subspecies of Blue-tailed Emerald (*Chlorostilbon mellisugus*)

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (*Amazilia tzacatl*)—A common lowland species in western Ecuador. 6 in all were seen at Pacha Quinde and Sachatamia feeders

Andean Emerald (*Amazilia franciae*)—6-10 were seen at Pacha Quinde feeders; a few more at Sachatamia; stunning glittering azure head in good light!

Speckled Hummingbird (*Adelomyia melanogenys*)—5-6 were seen at Pacha Quinde feeders; a few more at Sachatamia

Fawn-breasted Brilliant (*Heliodoxa rubinoides*)—Common at Pacha Quinde feeders, and more were found at Sachatamia

Empress Brilliant (*Heliodoxa emperatrix*)—At least 2 of this rather scarce, spectacular Chocó-Andean endemic were seen at Pacha Quinde feeders; another male was seen repeatedly at Sachatamia

Buff-tailed Coronet (*Boissonneaua flavescens*)—Common at Pacha Quinde and Bellavista feeders; others at Sachatamia. Remember wing-lifting, cinnamon “wing-pits” and buffy tail; with glittering pale-green face in good light!

Velvet-purple Coronet (*Boissonneaua jardini*)—This spectacular Chocó-Andean endemic was very common at Sachatamia feeders, with spectacular looks!

Brown Inca (*Coeligena wilsoni*)—At least 4 were seen regularly at Pacha Quinde feeders; others were found at Sachatamia

Collared Inca (*Coeligena torquata*)—A pair of this “dapper” montane species were seen closely at Bellavista feeders

Gorgeted Sunangel (*Heliangelus strophianus*)—2 were seen at Bellavista feeders

Purple-bibbed Whitetip (*Urosticte benjamini*)—Fairly common (for such a scarce species) at Pacha Quinde and Sachatamia feeders

Booted Racket-tail (*Ocreatus underwoodii*)—This wonderful little hummer was quite common at Pacha Quinde feeders; also pretty common at Sachatamia

Violet-tailed Sylph (*Aglaiocercus coelestis*)—This Chocó-Andean specialty with its stunning tail, was quite common at Pacha Quinde and Sachatamia feeders

Purple-throated Woodstar (*Calliflox mitchellii*)—6, including males, females and juveniles were seen at Pacha Quinde feeders; a bee-like Chocó-Andean endemic

White-bellied Woodstar (*Chaetocercus mulsant*)—1 female was seen once at Pacha Quinde feeders; somewhat bulkier than the previous species, with white belly

Little Woodstar (*Chaetocercus bombus*)—1 female was seen twice, but only very briefly at Sachatamia feeders

TROGONS & QUETZALS: TROGONIDAE

Golden-headed Quetzal (*Pharomachrus auriceps*)—Heard only on 5 Nov.; then seen (scoped) well along the Mindo entrance road

TOUCANS: RAMPHASTIDAE

Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan (*Andigena laminirostris*)—Only 1 were seen along the Ecoroute; others heard. A special Chocó-Andean endemic

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES: PICIDAE

Powerful Woodpecker (*Campephilus pollens*)—1 male of this spectacular species was seen along the Ecoroute on 5 November

OVENBIRDS: FURNARIIDAE

Red-faced Spinetail (*Cranioleuca erythropis*)—This arboreal species were seen on two days at Sachatamia; 3 in all including 1 juvenile bird

Montane Woodcreeper (*Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger*)—At least a pair were seen incredibly close at Sachatamia street-light

Strong-billed Woodcreeper (*Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus*)—A spectacular pair were watched at point-blank range at Sachatamia street-light

TAPACULOS: RHINOCRYPTIDAE

Nariño Tapaculo (*Scytolopus vicini*)—Heard only at Sachatamia

Spillmann's Tapaculo (*Scytolopus spillmanni*)—Heard only along the Ecoroute

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: TYRANNIDAE

Streak-necked Flycatcher (*Mionectes striaticollis*)—At least 1 was seen with a small mixed foraging flock along the Ecoroute on 6 Nov.

Smoke-colored Pewee (*Contopus fumigatus*)—1 was seen along the Ecoroute on 6 November

Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*)—1 was seen only briefly along the Ecoroute

Golden-crowned Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes chrysocephalus*)—A nice pair were seen closely at Sachatamia street-light

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)—At least 5 were seen around Sachatamia and the Mindo entrance road

One-colored Becard (*Platypsaris homochrous*)—An apparent family group were seen quite well at the Sachatamia street-light

MANAKINS: PIPRIDAE

Golden-winged Manakin (*Masius chrysopterus*)—2 were seen repeatedly (they're fast), an adult and juvenile male, feeding on *Miconia* fruit near the Sachatamia street-light

Club-winged Manakin (*Machaeropterus deliciosus*)—Heard only at Sachatamia

VIREOS & ALLIES: VIREONIDAE

Rufous-browed Peppershrike (*Cyclarhis gujanensis*)—1 was seen very closely at Sachatamia street-light. This is a rather uncommon species in this area; although supposedly belonging to the race *virenticeps*, this bird was quite olivaceous and not very bright yellowish on throat and breast

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*)—At least 6 were seen at Sachatamia; this a resident race

Brown-capped Vireo (*Vireo leucophrys*)—3 or so were seen closely at Sachatamia street-light

CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES: CORVIDAE

Turquoise Jay (*Cyanolyca turcosa*)—4 were seen well along the Ecoroute on 5 Nov.; heard

again there on the 6th

WRENS: TROGLODYTIDAE

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)—2 were hanging around Sachatamia; others heard.

Often considered a separate species, Southern House Wren (*T. musculus*)

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorhina leucophrys*)—Heard only, mostly along the Ecoroute on both days

THRUSHES & ALLIES: TURDIDAE

Andean Solitaire (*Myadestes ralloides*)—Heard only, once along the Ecoroute on 6 Nov.

Great Thrush (*Turdus fuscater*)—Generally common highland species; at least 2 were seen along in Quito

Glossy-black Thrush (*Turdus serranus*)—1 adult male was glimpsed crossing the road along the Ecoroute on 6 Nov.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: PARULIDAE

Tropical Parula (*Parula pitiayumi*)—1 or so were seen at Sachatamia on 5 Nov.

Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*)—3 in all were seen (must just be arriving from the north) over both days along the Ecoroute and at Sachatamia

Slate-throated Whitestart (*Myioborus miniatus*)—A rather common mixed flock participant at lower elevations; only 1 was seen at Pacha Quinde. Another along the Ecoroute. Also called Redstart by many authors.

TANAGERS & ALLIES: THRAUPIDAE

Grass-green Tanager (*Chlorornis riefferii*)—Several were heard and 1 was seen along the Ecoroute on 5 Nov.

Dusky Bush-Tanager (*Chlorospingus semifuscus*)—1 was seen along the Ecoroute; at least 3 more were seen super closely at Sachatamia street-lights and fruit feeders

White-lined Tanager (*Tachyphonus rufus*)—A family group was seen around Sachatamia fruit feeders

Lemon-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus icteronotus*)—A common species of the western lowlands; several were seen around Sachatamia (only a few males)

Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*)—Common on both days at lower elevations, especially at Sachatamia

Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*)—1 was seen well (scoped) but briefly at Sachatamia

Blue-capped Tanager (*Thraupis cyanocephala*)—At least 2 were seen around Sachatamia

Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager (*Anisognathus somptuosus*)—Common at sachatamia with unbelievably close looks around the street-light

Golden Tanager (*Tangara arthus*)—6 or so were seen repeatedly and at close quarters at Sachatamia

Flame-faced Tanager (*Tangara parzudakii*)—2 of this real beauty were seen well at Sachatamia

Golden-naped Tanager (*Tangara ruficervix*)—A pair were seen well at Pacha Quinde

Beryl-spangled Tanager (*Tangara nigroviridis*)—At least 2 were finally seen (and well) along the Ecoroute with a small mixed foraging flock

Black-capped Tanager (*Tangara heinei*)—A pair was glimpsed, unfortunately poorly, at Sachatamia

Swallow Tanager (*Tersina viridisi*)—1 smashing handsome male was scoped at the 'Y' de Mindo (Mindó turnoff)

BUNTINGS, SPARROWS & ALLIES: EMBERIZIDAE

Tricolored Brush-Finch (*Atlapetes tricolor*)—At least 3 were seen closely at the Sachatamia street-light

Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*)—Common highland species throughout the Andes

SALTATORS, CARDINALS & ALLIES: CARDINALIDAE

Black-winged Saltator (*Saltator atripennis*)—Heard only several times at Sachatamia

SISKINS, & ALLIES: FRINGILLIDAE

Thick-billed Euphonia (*Euphonia lanirostris*)—1 female was seen a couple of times at the fruit feeders at Sachatamia

Orange-bellied Euphonia (*Euphonia xanthogaster*)—A pair was seen along the Ecoroute and several more were seen at Sachatamia