

**ECUADOR:
TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP
JULY 23–25, 2014**

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By Paul Greenfield



Violet-tailed Sylph

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The Ecuador: Tandayapa Pre-trip was originally designed as an opportunity to experience a “snapshot” sample of the avian riches of this extremely biodiverse South American country as a setting for comparison with the relatively austere ecosystem of the Galapagos Archipelago. It should go without saying that nature can be very unpredictable and, in reality, there is no way to actually predict what this brief 48-hour itinerary will bring. I, for one, am always surprised! This July’s pre-trip began with a slight change of plans; news of a problem en route to our originally planned first stop forced us to move to a “Plan B.”

We began with a leisurely departure from Hotel Quito, after a sumptuous buffet breakfast and checkout. We headed northwest across the Equatorial line and made two brief stops, one at a local gas station and then at a small Equatorial Monument at the Calacalí town square (the more famous Monument, and complex, we passed by actually does not sit firmly on the Equator!). Along with some more touristy activities and photos, we saw a few local Andean bird species before continuing on to our “Plan B” stop-site, Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve.

Wow, what a way to dive into our “experience”! It is not easy to describe the dizzying hummingbird activity here; as we settled in, each of us taking our place along a narrow terrace, face-to-face with a series of nectar feeders and flowering shrubs, we were bombarded with many dozens of hummers everywhere—hover-feeding, perched, fighting, zooming every-which-way...all at once! Mesmerizing, confused, and dazzling might describe the atmosphere. Slowly we began to settle in and identify species as they appeared (and disappeared in a flash!). The wonderful thing about these feeding stations is that each of us is given repeated opportunities to see every species, each with their specific behavior and field marks, and eventually become familiar with this diverse collection of whirling gems: White-necked Jacobin, White-whiskered and Tawny-bellied hermits, Brown and Sparkling violetears, Booted Racket-tail, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Fawn-breasted and Green-crowned brilliants, White-bellied and Purple-throated woodstars, and Western and Andean emeralds along with Rufous-tailed Hummingbird kept us in a sort of tunnel-vision mode. Most of our group did not even notice the plantain banana feeders off to our left until a female Red-headed Barbet showed up; then came Thick-billed and Orange-bellied euphonias and Silver-throated Tanager among other visitors...it was hard to know where to look! Just before breaking into our box-lunches, we took a short stroll to the Alambi river bank to see what we could find. Dang! Not bad: Torrent Tyrannulet, a pair of White-capped Dippers, and a nesting female Andean Cock-of-the-rock were the highlights. Back to lunch, more hummers, and then off towards our final destination, with one additional planned stop on the way.

We drove on and then turned up a short distance along the lower end of the renowned *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute, a narrow country road, set up for bird and nature-watching. Here we chose a spot, parked our bus, and hung around a bit. A mixed-species foraging flock appeared with some fancy participants—Blue-winged and Black-chinned mountain-tanagers, with Golden and Beryl-spangled tanagers among them. This was followed by some movement in a tree just down the road...a male Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, foraging on some fruit! This fine spectacle, followed by a family group of Powerful Woodpeckers, signaled us that it was time to head for home, about a ten-minute drive to Séptimo Paraíso Lodge. We settled in, and some of us did a little late afternoon birding before getting to our day-list and dinner. The biggest surprise was a Scaled Antpitta in the bar/game room at Séptimo. I had no idea that that was this species' preferred habitat!

A dawn walk around the Séptimo Paraíso grounds followed, with a nice selection of species, some expected and some not: a singing Wattled Guan was spotted by Tony; Dark-backed Wood-Quail were seen right by the lodge by Steve and Michelle; and Rufous-bellied Nighthawk, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, a pair of Slaty Antwrens, Ornate Flycatcher, Golden Tanager, and a pair of Blue Seed eaters gathering nesting material were among the more memorable finds. After a fine breakfast we headed out for a short drive to Milpe Bird Sanctuary where we spent the rest of the morning. We had barely gotten off the bus when we were summoned by Luis, the reserve's manager, to see a pair of Chocó Toucans gulfing down plantain bananas at the fruit feeders—nice start! The nectar feeders were also busy, and we had great looks at Green Thorntail and Crowned Woodnymph among the 8 or so species there. The fruit feeders, forest edge, and entrance trail were also very active and we encountered quite a bit: a pair of Red-headed Barbets; Pale-mandibled Araçaris; Chestnut-mandibled Toucan; Golden-olive Woodpecker; Maroon-tailed Parakeet; Spotted Woodcreeper; Buff-fronted and Scaly-throated foliage-gleaners; Snowy-throated Kingbird; Cinnamon and One-colored becards; Ecuadorian Thrush; Three-striped, Buff-rumped, and

Chocó warblers; Blue-necked, Rufous-throated, and Flame-faced tanagers; Green Honeycreeper; Bananaquit; Black-winged Saltator; and Orange-billed Sparrow among other species. It was tough to pry ourselves from this great place, but we eventually returned to Séptimo Paraíso for lunch and some final birding, especially checking out the nectar feeders; Violet-tailed Sylph was the star at this point.

One final and unexpected treat was finding a male Pinocchio Anole right near the dining room; this odd lizard is very rare, local, range-restricted, and known from only a handful of sites—thought to be extinct for nearly 50 years and with a total world range of a mere 310 square miles! What a way to wrap up this Tandayapa Pre-trip, and what a way to prepare for our next adventure.

ITINERARY

July 24 — Morning drive to Tandayapa Valley and Alambi Cloud-Forest Lodge, continuing to the lower *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute and Séptimo Paraíso Lodge with brief stops at Calacalí gas station and Calacalí Equatorial Monument (overnight at Séptimo Paraíso)

July 25 — Early morning at Séptimo Paraíso; mid-morning Milpe Bird Sanctuary; lunch and midday at Séptimo Paraíso; return to Quito

BIRDS

GUANS, CHACHALACAS & CURASSOWS: CRACIDAE

Wattled Guan (*Aburria aburri*) — Heard often and 1 singing bird was seen; Séptimo Paraíso

NEW WORLD QUAIL: ODONTOPHORIDAE

Dark-backed Wood-Quail (*Odontophorus melanotus*) — Heard only by most of us; a pair was seen at Séptimo Paraíso Lodge(!) by Steve and Michelle

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNES: ARDEIDAE

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) — a fairly large number were seen overflying Séptimo Paraíso, to and from their roosts

NEW WORLD VULTURES: CATHARTIDAE

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) — Generally common throughout Ecuador—seen on both days

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aurea*) — As previous species, generally fairly common throughout Ecuador—seen on both days

KITES, EAGLES & HAWKS: ACCIPITRIDAE

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) — 2 were seen near Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Barred Hawk (*Morphnarchus princeps*) — Heard only at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Variable Hawk (*Geranoaetus polyosoma*) — 4 were seen soaring at Calacalí gas station

PIGEONS & DOVES: COLUMBIDAE

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) — Many at Calacalí and around Quito

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*) — 3 were seen along the Ecoroute
Plumbeous Pigeon (*Patagioenas plumbea*) — Singles were seen and others heard only on both days
Eared Dove (*Zenaida auriculata*) — Generally common around Quito and more open areas
White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*) — At least 1 was seen along the Ecoroute

CUCKOOS: CUCULIDAE

Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*) — Singles were seen along the lower Ecoroute and at Milpe Bird Sanctuary
Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*) — A few were seen along the highway *en route* to/from Milpe Bird Sanctuary by most of us

OWLS: STRIGIDAE

Cloud Forest Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium nubicola*) — Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso

NIGHTJARS & ALLIES: CAPRIMULGIDAE

Rufous-bellied Nighthawk (*Lurocalis rufiventris*) — 3–4 were seen at dawn by Randy and PJG

SWIFTS: APODIDAE

White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) — About a dozen were seen overhead at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

HUMMINGBIRD: TROCHILIDAE

White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*) — Common at Alambi, Milpe Bird Sanctuary & Séptimo Paraíso

White-whiskered Hermit (*Phaethornis yaruqui*) — Singles were seen repeatedly at Alambi, Milpe Bird Sanctuary and Séptimo Paraíso

Tawny-bellied Hermit (*Phaethornis syrmatorphorus*) — Singles were seen at Alambi and Séptimo Paraíso

Wedge-billed Hummingbird (*Schistes [Augastes] geoffroyi*) — 1 female was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Brown Violetear (*Colibri delphinae*) — Fair numbers were seen on both days

Sparkling Violetear (*Colibri coruscans*) — At least 5 were seen at Alambi feeders; a few more were seen at Séptimo Paraíso; common around Quito

Green Thorntail (*Discosura [Popelairia] conversii*) — 8 or so at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Violet-tailed Sylph (*Aglaiocercus coelestis*) — This Chocó-Andean specialty with its stunning tail was seen at Séptimo Paraíso on two days

Black-tailed Trainbearer (*Lesbia victoriae*) — At least 1 was seen at Hotel Quito by some of the group, another quick glance at Calacalí

Brown Inca (*Coeligena wilsoni*) — Only 1 was seen all too briefly at Séptimo Paraíso

Booted Racket-tail (*Ocreatus underwoodii*) — This charming little hummer was fairly common this trip; at Alambi feeders and more common at Séptimo Paraíso

Purple-bibbed Whitetip (*Urosticte benjamini*) — 1 male was seen at Alambi; another at Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and a pair was seen at Séptimo Paraíso (a scarce species away from feeders)

Fawn-breasted Brilliant (*Heliodoxa rubinoides*) — 2-3 were seen at Alambi feeders

Green-crowned Brilliant (*Heliodoxa jacula*) — Common at Alambi and more so at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

White-bellied Woodstar (*Chaetocercus mulsant*) — 1 female was seen at Alambi
Purple-throated Woodstar (*Calliflox mitchellii*) — Common at Alambi feeders; also
at Séptimo Paraíso

Western Emerald (*Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus*) — 1 glittering male was seen
repeatedly at Alambi. This population has often been considered a subspecies of
Blue-tailed Emerald (*Chlorostilbon mellisugus*) of the eastern Andes and lowlands

Crowned Woodnymph (*Thalurania colombica*) — Previously considered a separate
species, *T. fannyi*. Several seen on both days; mostly stunning males

Andean Emerald (*Amazilia franciae*) — At least 6 were seen at Alambi

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (*Amazilia tzacatl*) — A common lowland species in western
Ecuador; many seen on both days

TROGONS & QUETZALS: TROGONIDAE

Golden-headed Quetzal (*Pharomachrus auriceps*) — 1 was glimpsed in flight along the
Ecoroute; heard only at Séptimo Paraíso entrance road

Masked Trogon (*Trogon personatus*) — Heard only along the Ecoroute

MOTMOTS: MOMOTIDAE

Rufous Motmot (*Baryphthengus martii*) — Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso

BARBETS: CAPITONIDAE

Red-headed Barbet (*Eubucco bourcierii*) — 1 female was seen well at Alambi fruit feeders;
both a male and female were seen well at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

TOUCANS: RAMPHASTIDAE

Crimson-rumped Toucanet (*Aulacorhynchus haematopygius*) — 1 female was seen at
Séptimo Paraíso

Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan (*Andigena laminirostris*) — A male was seen well along the
Ecoroute; a female flew over too. A special Chocó-Andean endemic

Pale-mandibled Araçari (*Pteraglossus erythropygius*) — Often considered a race of
Collared Araçari (*P. torquatus*). 8-10 were seen well at Milpe Bird Sanctuary (also at
feeders)

Chestnut-mandibled Toucan (*Ramphastos swainsonii*) — Considered a race of Black-
mandibled Toucan (*R. ambiguus*) by some authors. 1 was seen at Milpe Bird
Sanctuary

Chocó Toucan (*Ramphastos brevis*) — Great looks at Milpe Bird Sanctuary (also at
feeders)

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES: PICIDAE

Golden-olive Woodpecker (*Colaptes rubiginosus*) — Nice looks at 1 at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Powerful Woodpecker (*Campephilus pollens*) — A family group of 3 were seen along the
Ecoroute

FALCONS & CARACARAS: FALCONIDAE

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) — 1 was seen briefly in flight from the bus, north of Quito

PARROTS & MACAWS: PSITTACIDAE

Maroon-tailed Parakeet (*Pyrrhura melanura*) — 2 or so, from a small flock, were seen at
Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Red-billed Parrot (*Pionus sordidus*) — At least 4 perched birds were seen along the Ecoroute

Bronze-winged Parrot (*Pionus chalcopterus*) — Some 2 or so were seen in flight at Milpe Bird Sanctuary, in fairly good light

TYPICAL ANTBIRDS: THAMNOPHILIDAE

Slaty Antwren (*Myrmotherula schisticolor*) — A pair was seen fairly well with a mixed species foraging flock at Séptimo Paraíso

ANTPITTAS: GRALLARIIDAE

Scaled Antpitta (*Grallaria guatamalensis*) — 1, surprisingly, was seen in Séptimo Paraíso's bar/game room!!; had entered in pursuit of some prey...great looks and photos!

ANTTHRUSHES: FORMICARIIDAE

Rufous-breasted Antthrush (*Formicarius rufipectus*) — Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso

OVENBIRDS & WOODCREEPERS: FURNARIIDAE

Spotted Woodcreep (*Xiphorhynchus erythropygius*) — 2 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Montane Woodcreeper (*Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger*) — 4 or so were seen along the Ecoroute; the most common montane woodcreeper in Ecuador

Buff-fronted Foliage-Gleaner (*Philydor rufus*) — A pair were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Scaly-throated Foliage-Gleaner (*Anabacerthia variagaticeps*) — 2 were seen gleaning the underside of mossy branches at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Red-faced Spinetail (*Cranioleuca erythropis*) — 2 juveniles of this arboreal species were seen at Séptimo Paraíso on our first afternoon; a single adult was seen there the following morning

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: TYRANNIDAE

Torrent Tyrannulet (*Serpophaga cinerea*) — 2 or so were seen well along the rapid river at Alambi

Golden-faced Tyrannulet (*Zimmerius chrysops*) — 2 or 3 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Ornate Flycatcher (*Myiobrycon ornatus*) — 5 of this 'snappy' little flycatcher were seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant (*Lophotriccus pileatus*) — Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso

Black Phoebe (*Satornis nigricans*) — A pair was seen along the rapid river at Alambi

Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) — A few were seen, both days; Septimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Golden-crowned Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes chrysocephalus*) — 2 seen, 1 at Séptimo Paraíso, another at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Snowy-throated Kingbird (*Tyrannus niveigularis*) — 1 perched beautifully at Milpe Bird Sanctuary parking area; a Tumbesian bioregional endemic

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) — Only 2 or so were seen, along the Ecoroute

COTINGAS: COTINGIDAE

Andean Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*) — A female at her nest was enjoyed by all at Alambi, under a brisge along the river

TITYRAS & ALLIES: TITYRIDAE

Cinnamon Becard (*Pachyramphus cinnamomeus*) — 5 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

One-colored Becard (*Platypsaris homochrous*) — Single females were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

VIREOS & ALLIES: VIREONIDAE

Brown-capped Vireo (*Vireo leucophrys*) — 1 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso, another 2 at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) — 1 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso, another 6 were found at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

SWALLOWS: HIRUNDINIDAE

Blue-and-white Swallow (*Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*) — Fairly common and widespread

Brown-bellied Swallow (*Orochelidon murina*) — 1 or so of this highland species were seen above Quito

WRENS: TROGLODYTIDAE

Southern Nightingale-Wren (*Microcerculus marginatus*) — Also called Scaly-breasted Wren by some authors. Heard only at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) — 1-2 were seen around Séptimo Paraíso Lodge; others heard. Often considered a separate species, Southern House-Wren (*T. musculus*)

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorhina leucophrys*) — Mostly heard only; 1 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

DIPPERS: CINCLIDAE

White-capped Dipper (*Cinclus leucocephalus*) — A nice pair was seen along the rapid river at Alambi; nest was nearby

THRUSHES & ALLIES: TURDIDAE

Andean Solitaire (*Myadestes ralloides*) — Heard only on both days

Ecuadorian Thrush (*Turdus maculirostris*) — 6 or so were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary, including close looks at fruit feeders

Great Thrush (*Turdus fuscater*) — Generally common highland species

Glossy-black Thrush (*Turdus serranus*) — 1 male was seen briefly along the lower Ecoroute

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: PARULIDAE

Tropical Parula (*Setophaga pitiayumi*) — 3 were seen, 2 at Séptimo Paraíso & 1 at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Three-striped Warbler (*Basileuterus tristriatus*) — 2-3 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Buff-rumped Warbler (*Myiothlypis fulvicauda*) — Heard, and 1 seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

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. 1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Slate-throated Whitestart (*Myioborus miniatus*) — A rather common mixed flock participant at lower elevations; 3 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary. Also called Redstart by many authors, though the species shows NO red!

TANAGERS & ALLIES: THRAUPIDAE

- White-lined Tanager (*Tachyphonus rufus*) — 3 were seen, especially 2 at Milpe Bird Sanctuary fruit 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
- Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager (*Anisognathus somptuosus*) — 2 of this fairly common and beautiful mountain-tanager were seen along the lowler Ecoroute
- Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager** (*Anisognathus notabilis*) — 2 or so were seen with a mixed foraging flock along the lower Ecoroute; an uncommon Chocó regional endemic
- Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*) — Common, especially at Milpe Bird Sanctuary fruit feeders
- Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*) — 2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso; another 5 or so were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary, especially at the fruit feeders
- Golden-naped Tanager (*Tangara ruficervix*) — 1 was seen well by a few of our group at Séptimo Paraíso
- Black-capped Tanager (*Tangara heinei*) — 1-2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso
- Blue-necked Tanager (*Tangara cyanicollis*) — Several of this common but stunning tanager were seen at both Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary; the species seems to be spreading to higher elevations
- Rufous-throated Tanager** (*Tangara rufigula*) — A pair was seen repeatedly and closely at Milpe Bird Sanctuary fruit feeders; a Chocó regional endemic
- Beryl-spangled Tanager (*Tangara nigroviridis*) — Only 1 of this attractive montane tanager was seen along the lower Ecoroute
- Flame-faced Tanager** (*Tangara parzudakii*) — A pair of this 'eye-opening' species were seen closely at Milpe Bird Sanctuary fruit feeders
- Golden Tanager (*Tangara arthus*) — Rather common, and seen well on both days
- Silver-throated Tanager (*Tangara icterocephala*) — A few were seen at Alambi and Milpe Bird Sanctuary fruit feeders
- Swallow Tanager (*Tersina viridis*) — A male (possibly a female too) was seen at Séptimo Paraíso by a few of our group
- Green Honeycreeper (*Chlorophanes spiza*) — A sopectacular male was seen closely at Milpe Bird Sanctuary fruit feeders
- Variable Seedeater (*Sporophila corvina*) — A pair was seen at Séptimo Paraíso
- Buff-throated Saltator (*Saltator maximus*) — Quite a few were seen at both Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary
- Black-winged Saltator** (*Saltator atripennis*) — 3 or so were seen; at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

BUNTINGS & NEW WORLD SPARROWS: EMBERIZIDAE

- Orange-billed Sparrow** (*Arremon aurantirostris*) — 1 beauty was seen a couple of ties at the Milpe Bird Sanctuary fruit feeder . . . Now this is a sparrow!!
- Tricolored Brush-Finch** (*Atlapetes tricolor*) — Pairs were seen at Septimo Paraíso on both days
- Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*) — Common species throughout the Andes
- Dusky Chlorospingus (*Chlorospingus semifuscus*) — 2 were seen along the lower Ecoroute. Formally called Dusky Bush-Tanager

Yellow-throated Chlorospingus (*Chlorospingus flavigularis*) — 6 or so were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary. Formally called Yellow-throated Bush-Tanager

CARDINALS & ALLIES: CARDINALIDAE

Blue Seedeater (*Amaurospiza concolor*) — A pair of this locally uncommon species was seen gathering nesting material in *Guadua* bamboo at Séptimo Paraíso

SISKINS, CROSSBILLS & ALLIES: FRINGILLIDAE

Thick-billed Euphonia (*Euphonia laniirostris*) — Quite common at Alambi and Milpe Bird Sanctuary (best at the fruit feeders)

Orange-bellied Euphonia (*Euphonia xanthogaster*) — Pairs were seen at Alambi and Milpe Bird Sanctuary fruit feeders

MAMMALS

SQUIRRELS: SCIURIDAE

Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*) — 1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary (came to fruit feeders); seemed to be afflicted with many bot-flies

AGOUTIES: DASYPROCTIDAE

Central American Agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*) — 1 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

OTHER CREATURES

Pinocchio Anole (*Anolis pinocho*) — This strange, rare, threatened and range-restricted *Anolis* lizard was seen at Séptimo Paraíso; fantastic!!