

**ECUADOR: TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP
TO GALAPAGOS CRUISE
OCTOBER 28-30, 2015**



Booted Racket-tail

©Paul J. Greenfield

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By Paul Greenfield

They say that in order to embark on an exciting adventure you have to first step out the door—and that is what we confirmed, again, on our November 2015 Tandayapa Pre-trip. Just by stepping out the door during this relatively brief preamble to our upcoming Galapagos Cruise—along the Northwestern Andean Slopes of Ecuador—we managed to see and experience a whole lot. It's actually amazing just how much. We descended from Quito and the interAndean valley down towards our initial destination in the misty, cloud-forested foothills of the Tandayapa Valley. It wasn't seconds upon our arrival at Pacha Quindi before we were immersed in a frenzy of hummingbirds everywhere we looked! Amidst spectacular views of the densely forested mountain, we gazed motionless for a few minutes before reacting, and then exotic names were rattled off machine-gun style in an attempt to make some sense out of the avian chaos, as the different species filled the air with crazy pirouettes and acrobatics—Green Violetear, Sparkling Violetear, Violet-tailed Sylph, Brown Inca, Collared Inca, Buff-tailed Coronet, Booted Racket-tail, Rufous-gaped Hillstar, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Empress Brilliant, White-bellied Woodstar, Purple-throated Woodstar, Western Emerald, Andean Emerald, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, and Wedge-billed Hummingbird...what a display! Along with some birding along a forest trail and a filling field lunch, we enjoyed nice looks at a close Plumbeous Pigeon, a pair of the fabulous Toucan Barbet (!), Golden-crowned Flycatchers, Crimson-rumped Toucanets, beautiful Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers, and Blue-capped, Fawn-breasted, Golden-naped, and Golden tanagers.

We explored the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute and eventually located a fine Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan—certainly one of Ecuador's finest! Before heading to our hotel, we made a final afternoon stop at Casa Rolando, a newly set up local "garden" complete with plantain bananas and nectar feeders. Wow! It's incredible what these simple "home-made" endeavors can attract: more special hummingbirds, including the stunning Velvet-purple Coronet; another wonderful (and close!) pair of Toucan Barbets; a pair of the special Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager; and White-lined, Lemon (Flame)-rumped, Blue-gray, Palm, Black-capped, and Flame-faced tanagers. Thick-billed and Orange-bellied euphonias also made stellar appearances. It was time to call it a day. As we pulled into Séptimo Paraíso, a Common Potoo was spotted on its nest, just outside the lodge's dining room—a fitting end to a splendid day.

We met the dawn by stepping out the door for some leisurely pre-breakfast birding around the lodge's grounds. A nice way to start the day, with a pair of Golden-headed Quetzals, Red-headed Barbet, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, a flock of Barred Parakeets, Montane Woodpecker, Slaty Spinetail, Ornate Flycatcher, Ecuadorian Thrush, Tropical Parula, Blue-necked Tanager, Buff-throated and Black-winged saltators, Tricolored Brushfinch, Summer Tanager, and a juvenile Rose-breasted Grosbeak. But perhaps best of all were the great looks we had of a small group of Yellow-collared Chlorophonias! After breakfast, we drove a short distance to the Milpe Bird Sanctuary where we spent the remainder of the morning

watching feeders and birding this rich protected area which is owned and managed by the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation. Hummers were among the first birds to attract our attention, with White-necked Jacobins, 1 or 2 White-whiskered Hermits, Green Thorntails, Green-crowned Brilliants, Crowned Woodnymphs (the male is a shocker!), Andean Emeralds, and Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds showing off in numbers, along with a Bananaquit. We even observed a Stripe-throated Hermit feeding on flowering shrubs right around the reserve station. The plantain feeders were somewhat active; though with lots of forest trees carrying fruit at this time, many species were too busy up in the canopy to bother to show up to check them out. At any rate, we got good close looks at several tanagers, including White-lined, Blue-gray, Palm, Lemon-rumped, Silver-throated, Golden, and Golden-naped. Perhaps the most exciting “visitor” was a beautiful Orange-billed Sparrow...now that’s a sparrow! We then came upon a mixed-species foraging flock with another Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Wedge-billed and Spotted woodcreepers, Cinnamon and One-colored becards, Red-eyed Vireo, Swainson’s Thrush, Tropical Parula, Slate-throated Whitestart, Yellow-throated Chlorospingus, and more Summer Tanagers. We also saw Ruddy Pigeon, Squirrel Cuckoo, Bronze-winged Parrots, a flock of White-collared Swifts, Pale-mandibled Araçari, Chocó Toucan, and a distant Bat Falcon, along with Acadian, Olive-sided, and Rusty-margined flycatchers.

We headed back to Séptimo Paraíso for a final lunch and some light birding in these avian-rich Chocó cloudforests before initiating our return to Quito. With a lot to think about, our heads filled with images of fabulous and exotic bird species and wonderful experiences, we wound our way back to “whence we came,” somewhat torn between embracing fond memories of our last two days of mega-biodiversity immersion and reforming our expectations for the days to come—in a very different realm, cruising the Enchanted Isles.

ITINERARY:

July 09 – Morning drive to Tandayapa Valley and Pacha Quindi, continuing to the lower *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute; a brief stop at Calacalí gas station and ‘Casa’ Rolando (overnight: Séptimo Paraíso)

July 10— Pre-breakfast birding at Séptimo Paraíso; mid-morning Milpe Bird Sanctuary; lunch and midday at Séptimo Paraíso; return to Quito

BIRDS:

H = Heard only

GUANS, CHACHALACAS & CURASSOWS: CRACIDAE

Andean Guan (*Penelope montagnii*)—1 was glimpsed as it flew across the highway below Calacalí

Wattled Guan (*Aburria aburri*)—the bizarre call of this species was heard a few times in the early morning at Séptimo Paraíso

Sickle-winged Guan (*Chamaepetes goudotii*)—1 was seen briefly along the Ecoroute

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNES: ARDEIDAE

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)—fairly large to large numbers were seen overflying Séptimo Paraíso—to and from their roosts—on both days

NEW WORLD VULTURES: CATHARTIDAE

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)—Generally common throughout Ecuador—2 were seen by Judy on our first day; 5-6 were kettling over Milpe Bird Sanctuary on day 2

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aurea*)—As previous species, generally fairly common throughout Ecuador—1-4 seen this trip overflying Pacha Quindi, Séptimo and Milpe

PIGEONS & DOVES: COLUMBIDAE

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*)—Only singles were seen in flight from Pacha Quindi

Plumbeous Pigeon (*Patagioenas plumbea*)—1 was seen 'super' well inside forest at Pacha Quindi

Ruddy Pigeon (*Patagioenas subvinacea*)—1 was seen perched at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*)—1 was hanging around Pacha Quindi plantain feeder (never actually on it)

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

CUCKOOS: CUCULIDAE

Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*)—2 seen along the Ecoroute; 1 at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

POTOOS: NYCTIBIIDAE

Common Potoo (*Nyctibius griseus*)—1 was found on its day roost at Séptimo Paraíso; seen beautifully on both days

SWIFTS: APODIDAE

White-chinned Swift (*Cypseloides cryptus*)—A few were seen fairly well over Pacha Quindi; a tough species to ID, like most neotropical swifts!

White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*)—A flock of some 30 were seen overhead at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

HUMMINGBIRD: TROCHILIDAE

White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*)—8-10 at Milpe Bird Sanctuary nectar feeders

White-whiskered Hermit (*Phaethornis yaruqui*)—1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; 1 at Séptimo Paraíso

Stripe-throated Hermit (*Phaethornis striigularis*)—1 was seen closely at flowering shrubs at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Wedge-billed Hummingbird (*Schistes [Augastes] geoffroyi*)—1 female was puncture-feeding on flowers at Pacha Quindi

Green Violetear (*Colibri thalassinus*)—Fairly common (4-5) at Pacha Quindi nectar feeders

Sparkling Violetear (*Colibri coruscans*)—Fairly common at Pacha Quindi feeders; a common species in the highlands and around Quito

Green Thorntail (*Discosura conversii*)—Surprisingly, only 1 male was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary feeders

Speckled Hummingbird (*Adelomtia melanogenys*)—A few of this non-glittering hummer were seen at Pacha Quindi feeders

Violet-tailed Sylph (*Aglaiocercus coelestis*)—At least 8 of this stunning Chocó endemic were seen; Pacha Quindi and Casa Rolando

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

Brown Inca (*Coeligena wilsoni*)—4-5 were seen; Pacha Quindi & Casa Rolando feeders
Collared Inca (*Coeligena torquata*)—1-2 stunning male was seen at Pacha Quindi feeders
 Buff-tailed Coronet (*Boissonneaua flavescens*)—Common, with its wing-lifting, cinnamon ‘wing-pits’, buff tail and brilliant chartreuse face, at Pacha Quindi
Velvet-purple Coronet (*Boissonneaua jardini*)—4 of this spectacular Chocó endemic were seen at Casa Rolando
Booted Racket-tail (*Ocreatus underwoodii*)—At least 6 of this special little hummer were seen at Pacha Quindi (males and females), also Casa Rolando
Rufous-gaped Hillstar (*Urochroa bougueri*)—Often lumped with White-tailed Hillstar (*U. leucura*) of east-Andean slope. 1 of this rather rare Chocó endemic was seen well perching at Pacha Quindi wood pile, under the house!
Purple-bibbed Whitetip (*Urostitte benjamini*)—4 were seen; at Pacha Quindi and Casa Rolando
 Fawn-breasted Brilliant (*Heliodoxa rubinoides*)—1-2 were seen at Pacha Quindi feeders
 Green-crowned Brilliant (*Heliodoxa jacula*)—Fairly common at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; also at Séptimo Paraíso
Empress Brilliant (*Heliodoxa imperatrix*)—6 seen at Pacha Quindi and Casa Rolando; a robust and rare Chocó endemic
 White-bellied Woodstar (*Chaetocercus mulsant*)— 1 female was seen at Pacha Quindi
Purple-throated Woodstar (*Calliflox mitchellii*)—Common (20+) at Pacha Quindi and Casa Rolando feeders
Western Emerald (*Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus*)—1 male was seen at Pacha Quindi
Crowned Woodnymph (*Thalurania colombica*)—Previously considered a separate species, Green-crowned Woodnymph (*T. fannyi*), but has just recently been lumped with Purple-crowned Woodnymph. 5 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; including stunning males
 Andean Emerald (*Amazilia franciae*)—Common at Pacha Quindi; also at Casa Rolando
 Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (*Amazilia tzacatl*)—A common lowland species in western Ecuador; 8-10 seen at Pacha Quindi and Casa Rolando; fairly common at Milpe Bird Sanctuary and Séptimo Paraíso

TROGONS & QUETZALS: TROGONIDAE

Golden-headed Quetzal (*Pharomachrus auriceps*)—**H** along the Ecoroute; 2 were seen beautifully at Séptimo Paraíso on 30 Oct.

BARBETS: CAPITONIDAE

Red-headed Barbet (*Eubucco bourcierii*)— 1 male was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; others **H**

TOUCAN-BARBETS: SEMNORNITHIDAE

Toucan Barbet (*Semnornis ramphastinus*)—2 were seen at Pacha Quindi; another 2 were seen close-up at Casa Rolando; a very special Chocó endemic

TOUCANS: RAMPHASTIDAE

Crimson-rumped Toucanet (*Aulacorhynchus haematopygius*)—A close pair was seen at Pacha Quindi

Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan (*Andigena laminirostris*)—1 of this emblematic species was seen well along the Ecoroute. Another special Chocó endemic

Pale-mandibled Araçari (*Pteraglossus erythropygius*)—Often considered a race of

Collared Araçari (*P. torquatus*); as Pale-mandibled, it is a Tumbesian bioregional endemic. 2 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Chestnut-mandibled Toucan (*Ramphastos swainsonii*)—Considered a race of Black-mandibled Toucan (*R. ambiguus*) by some authors and thus often called Yellow-throated Toucan. **H** at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Chocó Toucan (*Ramphastos brevis*)—1 was seen well at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; a Chocó bioregional endemic

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES: PICIDAE

Smoky-brown Woodpecker (*Picoides fumigatus*)—No longer in genus *Veniliornis*. Singles were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

FALCONS & CARACARAS: FALCONIDAE

Amercian Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)—1 was seen from the Calacalí gas station

Bat Falcon (*Falco ruficularis*)—1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

PARROTS & MACAWS: PSITTACIDAE

Barred Parakeet (*Bolborhynchus lineola*)—A typically high-flying band of 20 was seen over Séptimo Paraíso

Red-billed Parrot (*Pionus sordidus*)—2 were seen in flight over Séptimo Paraíso

Bronze-winged Parrot (*Pionus chalcopterus*)—2 were seen perched at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Chocó Parakeet (*Pyrrhura pacifica*)—Considered a race of Maroon-tailed Parakeet (*P. melanura*) by some authors. **H** at Milpe Bird Sanctuary.

ANTPITTAS: GRALLARIIDAE

Chestnut-crowned Antpitta (*Grallaria ruficapilla*)—**H** along the Ecoroute

ANTTHRUSHES: FORMICARIIDAE

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

OVENBIRDS & WOODCREEPERS: FURNARIIDAE

Wedge-billed Woodcreeper (*Glyphorhynchus spirurus*)—1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Spotted Woodcreeper (*Xiphorhynchus erythropygius*)—At least 1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Montane Woodcreeper (*Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger*)—1 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner (*Philydor rufum*)—1 was seen by part of our group at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Slaty Spinetail (*Synallaxis brachyura*)—1 of this skulker was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: TYRANNIDAE

Ornate Flycatcher (*Myiobrycon ornatus*)—1 of this charming little flycatcher was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*)—1 of this boreal migrant was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary parking area

Smoke-colored Pewee (*Contopus fumigatus*)—1 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*)—1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*)—1 of this boreal migrant was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Rusty-margined Flycatcher (*Myiozetetes cayanensis*)—Singles were seen at Casa Rolando

and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Golden-crowned Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes chrysocephalus*)—2 were seen (scoped) at Pacha Quindi

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)—2 were seen along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute; rather common in the Milpe area

MANAKINS: PIPRIDAE

Club-winged Manakin (*Machaeropterus deliciosus*)—**H** at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

TITYRAS & ALLIES: TITYRIDAE

Cinnamon Becard (*Pachyramphus cinnamomeus*)—3-4 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

One-colored Becard (*Pachyramphus homochrous*)—2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso

VIREOS & ALLIES: VIREONIDAE

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*)—Only 1 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

SWALLOWS: HIRUNDINIDAE

Blue-and-white Swallow (*Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*)—Generally common and wide-spread in Ecuador; a few seen on our first day

Southern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*)—1 was seen perched and in flight at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

WRENS: TROGLODYTIDAE

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)—Formally often considered a separate species, Southern

House-Wren (*T. musculus*). 2 were seen around Séptimo Paraíso Lodge, others

H

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorhina leucophrys*)—**H** only on both days

THRUSHES & ALLIES: TURDIDAE

Andean Solitaire (*Myadestes ralloides*)—**H** at Séptimo Paraíso

Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*)—**H** along the Ecoroute; 2 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Ecuadorian Thrush (*Turdus maculirostris*)—2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso on the 29th; Singles were seen well at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary plantain feeders on the 30th

Great Thrush (*Turdus fuscater*)—Generally common highland species, seen on both days

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: PARULIDAE

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

Slate-throated Whitestart (*Myioborus miniatus*)—Only 1 was seen briefly at Milpe Bird Sanctuary. Also called Redstart by many authors though the species shows NO red!

TANAGERS & ALLIES: THRAUPIDAE

White-shouldered Tanager (*Tachyphonus luctuosus*)—1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

White-lined Tanager (*Tachyphonus rufus*)—4 were seen well at Casa Rolando feeders; 2 more were found at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Lemon-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus icteronotus*)—Now often considered a race of Flame-rumped Tanager (*R. flammigerus*). A common species of the western lowlands; many seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager (*Anisognathus somptuosus*)—4-5 of this fairly common and beautiful mountain-tanager were seen at Pacha Quindi, also feeding at the 'plantain' feeder there

Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager (*Anisognathus notabilis*)—A pair of this special Chocó endemic were seen closely at casa Rolando plantain feeders

Fawn-breasted Tanager (*Pipraeidea melanota*)—1 fancy male was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*)—Fairly common at Milpe Bird Sanctuary and Séptimo Paraíso

Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*)—3 were seen at Casa Rolando

Blue-capped Tanager (*Thraupis cyanocapala*)—1 was seen well at Pacha Quindi

Golden-naped Tanager (*Tangara ruficervix*)—6 were seen at Pacha Quindi and Casa Rolando ('plantain' feeder), also at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Black-capped Tanager (*Tangara heinei*)—A pair came to Casa Rolando feeders

Blue-necked Tanager (*Tangara cyanicollis*)—6-8 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Bay-headed Tanager (*Tangara gyrola*)—2 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Flame-faced Tanager (*Tangara parzudakii*)—A pair was seen beautifully at Casa Rolando feeders; a stunner!

Golden Tanager (*Tangara arthus*)—Rather common; 8-10 were seen on our first day; at both Pacha Quindi and Casa Rolando; similar numbers were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

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

White-sided Flowerpiercer (*Diglossa albilatera*)—A pair was seen in flowering shrubs at Pacha Quindi

Yellow-bellied Seedeater (*Sporophila nigricollis*)—Now placed with tanagers. 1 female was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*)—4 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary nectar feeders

Buff-throated Saltator (*Saltator maximus*)—2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Black-winged Saltator (*Saltator atripennis*)—At least 2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso

BUNTINGS & NEW WORLD SPARROWS: EMBERIZIDAE

Yellow-throated Chlorospingus (*Chlorospingus semifuscus*)—Formally called Yellow-throated Bush-Tanager, but no longer thought to be a tanager. At least 1 was seen with a mixed species flock at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Orange-billed Sparrow (*Arremon aurantirostris*)—1 adult came to feed around the 'plantain' feeders at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

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

Tricolored Brush-Finch (*Atlapetes tricolor*)—1 was seen well at Séptimo Paraíso

CARDINALS & ALLIES: CARDINALIDAE

Summer Tanager (*Pirangra rubra*)—Now no longer considered a tanager! How about calling it Summer Piranga? 1 male of this boreal migrant was seen at Casa Rolando; 3 others were seen—Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)—1 of this uncommon boreal migrant

was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

SISKINS, CROSSBILLS & ALLIES: FRINGILLIDAE

Thick-billed Euphonia (*Euphonia lanirostris*)—Fairly common and seen well on both days; also at feeders

Orange-bellied Euphonia (*Euphonia xanthogaster*)— Fairly common and seen well on both days; also at feeders

Yellow-collared Chlorophonia (*Chlorophonia flavirostris*)—3-5 were seen well in mistletoe at Séptimo Paraíso. A very special find!!!

MAMMALS:

SQUIRRELS: SCIURIDAE

Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*)—1 came around 'plantain' feeder at Pacha Quindi

REPTILES:

TROPIC LIZARDS: TROPIDURIDAE

Mist Whorltail-Iguana (*Stenocercus varius*)—3 of this rare Chocó endemic lizard were seen at Pacha Quindi