

**ECUADOR: TANDAYAPA PRE-TRIP
TO GALAPAGOS CRUISE**

JULY 8–10, 2015



Booted Racket-tail

©Paul J. Greenfield

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By Paul Greenfield

I am always surprised (perhaps reassured) by just how many (cool!) bird species one can find on a relatively short outing out of Quito. Our Tandayapa Pre-trip to our Galapagos Cruise was originally designed to offer a sort of avian “snippet” of the full potential that the western Andean slopes possess. As with all encounters with nature, conditions are always varied, one never really knows what will happen, and birds actually do have their own minds and needs—and are not obliged to fulfill our desires or fall into line with our plans. Nevertheless, it seems that the mere venturing out in the field gets some sort of serendipitous ball rolling.

We initiated our adventure by heading out to the northwest from the Hotel Quito lobby after a leisurely buffet breakfast and worked our way out of the city through the ever-increasing traffic. Once on our way we made an official “pit-stop” at the Calacalí gas station, complete with distant views of a soaring Variable Hawk and a family (?) group of resident American Kestrels. We then continued to our first destination—Pacha Quindi, the home of VENT leader Tony Nunnery and his lovely wife, Barbara Boltz—where we hunkered down for some serious hummer and bird watching. It was dizzying right from the get-go—wings whirring, colors flashing everywhere! We reveled in the presence of White-necked Jacobin; Wedge-billed Hummingbird; Brown, Green, and Sparkling violetears; Speckled Hummingbird; Green-tailed Trainbearer; Brown and Collared incas; Buff-tailed Coronet; Booted Racket-tail; Purple-bibbed Whitetip; Fawn-breasted Brilliant; Purple-throated Woodstar; Andean Emerald; and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird...not bad for one garden! This show was seconded by views of White-throated Hawk; Band-tailed Pigeon; White-tipped Dove; White-tipped Swift; Red-headed Barbet; Red-billed Parrot; Montane Woodcreeper; Streak-capped Treehunter; Streak-necked, Flavescent, and Golden-crowned flycatchers; Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager; Blue-capped, Golden-naped, Metallic-green, and Golden tanagers; White-sided Flowerpiercer; and Orange-bellied Euphonia.

By the time we moved on, after a filling packed-lunch (thanks to Juan!), we might have already been questioning this idea of the “snippet.” We wound our way up the cloud-enshrouded ridge, along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute, to a roadside clearing where we attempted to call in one of the region’s most emblematic species—with good and bad news to report. The solicited bird responded enthusiastically and came into view (that was the good news); the bad news was the thick fog that afforded us a mere vaguely-patterned silhouette, and after some patient waiting but no improvement we moved on towards our final destination, making one final stop as we descended out of the the brume; a second attempt at calling in “our” bird brought much better results—4 beautiful Plate-billed Mountain-Toucans showed themselves generously...man, now that’s what I’m talking about! Our day *now* seemed complete, and we made the final dash to our lodge. At Séptimo Paraíso, as we awaited room assignments and the moving of our bags, part of the group decided to walk about the grounds nearby—not much time, but “what-the heck,” right? Within just a few minutes, a Golden-headed Quetzal sounded off and, shortly after, came into view in response to my acceptable (it seems) whistled imitation of its call...great way to end the day!

Our following morning began with a customary pre-breakfast birding walk just around the lodge grounds, and by the time hunger struck, we enjoyed a variety of both new and familiar species, including: a Common Potoo on its day roost; another Red-headed Barbet; a spectacular pair of Toucan Barbets; Red-faced Spinetail; Ornate Flycatcher; Tropical Kingbird; Gray-breasted Wood-Wren; Brown-capped Vireo; Lemon (Flame)-rumped, Blue-gray, Palm, Metallic-green, and Blue-necked tanagers; Buff-throated and Black-winged saltators; and more Orange-bellied Euphonias.

After breakfast we took a short drive to Milpe Bird Sanctuary to close out the morning. Memorable here were the nectar and fruit feeders along with some pretty exciting forest and edge bird activity—Swallow-tailed Kites, a Barred Hawk, and a “kettle” of White-collared Swifts graced the skies above, while several White-necked Jacobins, White-whiskered Hermit, Green Thorntails, Green-crowned Brilliant, Crowned Woodnymph, an Andean Emerald, and Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds, along with a Bananaquit attacked the nectar feeders; the plantain banana feeders brought in plenty to see—Rufous Motmot; another pair of Red-headed Barbets; Pale-mandibled Araçari; Chestnut-mandibled and Chocó toucans; Lemon-rumped, Blue-gray, Palm, Golden-naped, Blue-necked, Rufous-throated, Golden, and Silver-throated tanagers; Green Honeycreeper; and Orange-billed Sparrow were among the highlights. The nearby woods were also jumping, and we managed to locate a male Chocó Trogon; Smoky-brown, Golden-olive, and Lineated woodpeckers; Spotted Woodcreeper; Buff-fronted and Scaly-throated foliage-gleaners; Slaty-capped Flycatcher; Tropical Parula; Chocó and Three-striped warblers; Slate-throated Whitestart; Flame-faced Tanager; and Yellow-throated Chlorospingus—nice morning!

We headed back for a very satisfying lunch and some final birding (even a second Common Potoo on its day roost!)—before heading back to Quito for our farewell dinner and time to prepare and change gears for the Galapagos cruise adventure to come...a nice snippet to say the least!

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 (overnight at Séptimo Paraíso)
- July 10— Early morning at Séptimo Paraíso; mid-morning Milpe Bird Sanctuary; lunch and midday at Séptimo Paraíso; return to Quito with brief stop at Calacalí Equatorial Monument

BIRDS:

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNs: ARDEIDAE

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)—fairly large number were seen overflying Séptimo Paraíso, to and from their roosts; 5 or so on the 9th; then some 200 on the morning of the 10th

NEW WORLD VULTURES: CATHARTIDAE

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)—Generally common throughout Ecuador—a fair number were kettling over Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aurea*)—As previous species, generally fairly common throughout Ecuador—1-2 seen this trip overflying Milpe

KITES, EAGLES & HAWKS: ACCIPITRIDAE

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)—4 of this beautiful raptor seen soaring over Milpe

Barred Hawk (*Morphnarchus princeps*)—1 seen soaring over Milpe (w/ Black Vultures)

Variable Hawk (*Geranoaetus polyosoma*)—1 seen soaring and hover-hunting, from Calacalí gas station

White-throated Hawk (*Buteo albigula*)—1 seen soaring, from Pacha Quindi; this is likely an austral migrant

PIGEONS & DOVES: COLUMBIDAE

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)—A small flock was seen at Calacalí

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*)—A band of 6 or so were seen in flight from Pacha Quindi

Plumbeous Pigeon (*Patagioenas plumbea*)—Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso

White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*)—Singles were seen at Pacha Quindi and Milpe

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

POTOOS: NYCTIBIIDAE

Common Potoo (*Nyctibius griseus*)—2 separate individuals were spotted on their day roosts at Séptimo Paraíso (one on the 9th, the other on the 10th)

SWIFTS: APODIDAE

White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*)—A large kettle was seen overhead at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

White-tipped Swift (*Aeronautes montivagus*)—3-4 were seen in rapid flight over Pacha Quindi

HUMMINGBIRD: TROCHILIDAE

White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*)—1 was seen at Pacha Quindi; 2-3 at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

White-whiskered Hermit (*Phaethornis yaruqui*)—1 was seen a couple of times at Milpe

Wedge-billed Hummingbird (*Schistes [Augastes] geoffroyi*)—1 seen puncture-feeding on 'Angel Trumpet' flowers at Pacha Quindi

Brown Violetear (*Colibri delphinae*)—1 at Pacha Quindi; 3 or so at Séptimo Paraíso

Green Violetear (*Colibri thalassinus*)—fairly common (5+) at Pacha Quindi nectar feeders

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

Green Thorntail (*Discosura conversii*)—6 or so (males and females) were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary feeders

Speckled Hummingbird (*Adelomyia melanogenys*)—2-3 were seen repeatedly at Pacha Quindi feeders and shrubs

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

Green-tailed Trainbearer (*Lesbia nuna*)—2-3 females were seen in *Verbena* shrubs at Pacha Quindi

Brown Inca (*Coeligena wilsoni*)—1-2 were seen a few times at Pacha Quindi
Collared Inca (*Coeligena torquata*)—1 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
Booted Racket-tail (*Ocreatus underwoodii*)—At least 6 of this special little hummer were seen at Pacha Quindi (males and females)
Purple-bibbed Whitetip (*Urosticte benjamini*)—1 male and 1 female were seen a few times at Pacha Quindi
 Fawn-breasted Brilliant (*Heliodoxa rubinoides*)—10+ were seen at Pacha Quindi feeders
 Green-crowned Brilliant (*Heliodoxa jacula*)—Common at Milpe Bird Sanctuary
Purple-throated Woodstar (*Calliflox mitchellii*)—Common (10+) at Pacha Quindi feeders
Crowned Woodnymph (*Thaluria 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 1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary
 Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (*Amazilia tzacatl*)—A common lowland species in western Ecuador; 3-4 seen at Pacha Quindi; 6 or so at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

TROGONS & QUETZALS: TROGONIDAE

Golden-headed Quetzal (*Pharomachrus auriceps*)—1 beautiful male was seen by part of our group; others were heard only
Chocó Trogon (*Trogon comptus*)—Aka Blue-tailed Trogon by some authors. 1 close male was watched at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; a Chocó bioregional endemic
 Collared Trogon (*Trogon collaris*)—Heard only (close-by) at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

MOTMOTS: MOMOTIDAE

Rufous Motmot (*Baryphthengus martii*)—1 was seen around and at the ‘plantain’ feeders at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

BARBETS: CAPITONIDAE

Red-headed Barbet (*Eubucco bourcierii*)—Nice looks at pairs, at Pacha Quindi, Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary (Wow!)

TOUCAN-BARBETS: SEMNORNITHIDAE

Toucan Barbet (*Semnornis ramphastinus*)—Fine scope views of a pair of this very special bird at Séptimo Paraíso (SUPER!!)

TOUCANS: RAMPHASTIDAE

Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan (*Andigena laminirostris*)—Up to 5 of this emblematic species were seen well along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute (two in fog). A special Chocó-Andean endemic
Pale-mandibled Araçari (*Pteraglossus erythropygius*)—Often considered a race of Collared Araçari (*P. torquatus*); as Pale-mandibled, it is a Tumbesian bioregional endemic. 10 were seen closely at ‘plantain’ feeders and nearby forest at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary
Chestnut-mandibled Toucan (*Ramphastos swainsonii*)—Considered a race of Black-mandibled Toucan (*R. ambiguus*) by some authors. 1 was seen on the ‘plantain’

feeder at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Chocó Toucan (*Ramphastos brevis*)—A pair was seen in forest and eventually came in to the ‘plantain’ feeder at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; a Chocó bioregional endemic

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES: PICIDAE

Smoky-brown Woodpecker (*Picoides fumigatus*)—No longer in genus *Veniliornis*. 1 was heard and glimpsed at Pacha Quindi; 2 more were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Golden-olive Woodpecker (*Colaptes rubiginosus*)—1 was seen ‘hammering away’ at its nest-hole at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Lineated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus*)—1 was seen briefly at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

FALCONS & CARACARAS: FALCONIDAE

Amercian Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)—3-4 were seen perched distantly from the Calacalí gas station

PARROTS & MACAWS: PSITTACIDAE

Red-billed Parrot (*Pionus sordidus*)—Heard and 1 glimpsed at Pacha Quindi; a pair was seen in flight at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Scaly-naped Amazon (*Amazona mercenarius*)—Called ‘parot’ by some authors. Heard only at Pacha Quindi

TYPICAL ANTBIRDS: THAMNOPHILIDAE

Zeledon’s Antbird (*Myrmotherula schisticolor*)—Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso

ANTTHRUSHES: FORMICARIIDAE

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

OVENBIRDS & WOODCREEPERS: FURNARIIDAE

Spotted Woodcreeper (*Xiphorhynchus erythropygius*)—At least 1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; eventually we all got fairly good looks

Montane Woodcreeper (*Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger*)—1 seen along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute

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

Scaly-throated Foliage-Gleaner (*Anabacerthia variagaticeps*)—1 seen from the pool area at Séptimo Paraíso

Streak-capped Treehunter (*Thripadectes virgaticeps*)—1 was glimpsed skulking about Pacha Quindi gardens

Red-faced Spinetail (*Cranioleuca erythropis*)—A group of 5 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: TYRANNIDAE

Steak-necked Flycatcher (*Mionectes striaticollis*)—1 was watched as it fed on fruit in the Pacha Quindi gardens

Slay-capped Flycatcher (*Leptopogon suoperciliaris*)—1 was with a mixed species flock at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Ornate Flycatcher (*Myiotriccus ornatus*)—3 of this charming little flycatcher were seen at Séptimo Paraíso

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

Flavescent Flycatcher (*Myiophobus flavicans*)—1 was seen in forest at Pacha Quindi

Golden-crowned Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes chrysocephalus*)—1 were seen (scoped) at Pacha Quindi; 2 more were found at Séptimo Paraíso
Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)—1 was spotted from the bus along the *Paseo del Quinde* Ecoroute and 2 more were seen at Séptimo Paraíso

VIREOS & ALLIES: VIREONIDAE

Brown-capped Vireo (*Vireo leucophrys*)—1 was seen at Pacha , also heard only by part of our group

WRENS: TROGLODYTIDAE

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)—3 were seen around Séptimo Paraíso Lodge on two days; formally often considered a separate species, Southern House-Wren (*T. musculus*)

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

THRUSHES & ALLIES: TURDIDAE

Andean Solitaire (*Myadestes ralloides*)—Heard very briefly at Séptimo Paraíso

Ecuadorian Thrush (*Turdus maculirostris*)—Heard only at Séptimo Paraíso & Milpe Bird Sanctuary

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

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: PARULIDAE

Tropical Parula (*Setophaga pitiayumi*)—1-2 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Three-striped Warbler (*Basileuterus tristriatus*)—2 were seen accompanying a mixed species flock 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. 2-3 seen with a mixed species flock at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Slate-throated Whitestart (*Myioborus miniatus*)—1-2 were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary. Also called Redstart by many authors though the species shows NO red!

TANAGERS & ALLIES: THRAUPIDAE

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 and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager (*Anisognathus somptuosus*)—6-8 of this fairly common and beautiful mountain-tanager were seen at Pacha Quindi, also feeding at the 'plantain' feeder there

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

Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*)—Up to 8 or so were seen at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Blue-capped Tanager (*Thraupis cyanocapala*)—1 was seen repeatedly at Pacha Quindi and around and at the 'plantain' feeder

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

Blue-necked Tanager (*Tangara cyanicollis*)—At least 1 was seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Rufous-throated Tanager (*Tangara rufigula*)—5 were seen repeatedly and around the 'plantain' feeders at Milpe Bird Sanctuary; a Chocó bioregional endemic

Metallic-green Tanager (*Tangara labradorides*)—A pair was seen at Séptimo Paraíso

Flame-faced Tanager (*Tangara parzudakii*)—A pair was seen briefly at Séptimo Paraíso

Golden Tanager (*Tangara arthus*)—Rather common; 3-4 were seen at Pacha Quindi; many more were found at both Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary

Silver-throated Tanager (*Tangara icterocephala*)—6 or so were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary 'plantain' feeders

Green Honeycreeper (*Cyanerpes caeruleus*)—1 spectacular male came in a couple of times to the 'plantain' feeders at Séptimo Paraíso

Black Flowerpiercer (*Diglossa humeralis*)—a few were seen in the Hotel Quito gardens

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

Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*)—1-2 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary nectar feeders

Buff-throated Saltator (*Saltator maximus*)—10 were seen, mostly at Séptimo Paraíso

Black-winged Saltator (*Saltator atripennis*)—1-4 was seen at Séptimo Paraíso on two days

BUNTINGS & NEW WORLD SPARROWS: EMBERIZIDAE

Orange-billed Sparrow (*Arremon aurantirostris*)—1 adult and a juvenile were seen nicely at the Milpe Bird Sanctuary 'plantain' feeders

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

Yellow-throated Chlorospingus (*Chlorospingus semifuscus*)—At least 2 were seen at Milpe Bird Sanctuary, with a mixed species flock. Formally called Yellow-throated Bush-Tanager, but no longer thought to be a tanager

SISKINS, CROSSBILLS & ALLIES: FRINGILLIDAE

Thick-billed Euphonia (*Euphonia lanirostris*)—A pair was seen at Pacha Quindi

Orange-bellied Euphonia (*Euphonia xanthogaster*)—1 male was seen at Séptimo Paraíso 'plantain' feeder; at least 6 came in to the Milpe Bird Sanctuary feeders

MAMMALS:

SQUIRRELS: SCIURIDAE

Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*)—1 came around 'plantain' feeder at Pacha Quindi; 4 more were seen around and on feeders at Séptimo Paraíso and Milpe Bird Sanctuary