

# ECUADOR: THE SOUTHERN ANDES

JULY 16-27, 2008

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*It is reasonable to ask “Why just Southern Ecuador for a birding trip, when there are so many other areas in Ecuador?” The simple answer is that there are almost unlimited opportunities for seeking the birds of the Andes Mountains in this region. The full answer to that question is quite complex, just as the region itself is, but some of the reasons include: (1) Endemism—meaning that there are birds here that are not found anywhere else in the world. The extreme example, of course, is the Jotocoto Antpitta, not discovered to science until 1997 and still known from only one small area! Other examples include the Bearded Guan, White-necked Parakeet, and Violet-throated and Neblina metaltails. (2) There are a surprising number of “range-restricted” species that are best found in this region and whose fate may ultimately be decided by the preservation of the forests here, including Coppery-chested Jacamar, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Equatorial Graytail, and Orange-banded Flycatcher. (3) Many rarely-seen mountain birds seem to be more “findable” here than elsewhere, including Black-and-Chestnut Eagle, Lanceolated Monklet, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Barred Fruiteater, Red-hooded Tanager, mountain-tanagers, Giant Conebill, Tit-like Dacnis and Plush-capped Finch, to pick a few examples. (4) Trail access at several key sites makes this region a great place to actually see some of the supreme skulkers of the mountain forests, particularly antpittas and tapaculos. Past trips have sometimes seen five or more species in these groups. (5) The region is relatively little-known and there are significant discoveries still to be made—witness the new species of flycatcher found here in the 1990s, now officially described and named the Foothill Elaenia. (6) The complex geography of Southern Ecuador supports many different habitats in a small area, and thus many different birds. Here the Andes are twisted and folded into a jumbled mass of ridge and valley systems, some drier and some wetter, and by covering a wide range of elevations we will have the opportunity to see a fantastic assortment of the birds of the Andes. (7) Major protected areas that we will bird include the Tapichalaca Reserve, Podocarpus National Park, and Cajas National Recreation Area. Unfortunately, the mountain forests are fast disappearing in many places where they are not protected. (8) Tanagers and hummingbirds, two of the most beautiful and appealing families of tropical birds, are especially prominent and diverse here. That in itself makes this region alluring to many of us! (9) The scenery is outstanding and the climate refreshing. (10) This is a more traditional part of Ecuador than the north, with an interesting culture and a lot of history.*

*The Andes harbor the richest montane avifauna anywhere and Southern Ecuador offers many chances for birding these spectacular mountains. By systematically working various locales and little-traveled roads at different elevations, we will steadily build an impressive list including many species not often seen anywhere. The mountain birds can be notoriously unpredictable and locating*

*them can be very weather dependent, but we often have the option of moving up or down the slopes in search of them. Patience and persistence are always rewarded here.*

*This tour has been planned to show you a wide array of birds, but a few words of caution are prudent. In our many years of birding the Neotropics we have found that it is extremely important to get out early while the birds are singing and more active. Most mornings we will be out very early and most days we will be out in the field the bulk of the day. Most of our birding will be on foot, along little-traveled roads and trails. In general, the walking is not difficult, but on several days we will bird at high elevations or offer the option of a longer hike. We can also expect some days with rain or mist (which of course is why these forests are so incomparably lush). For those persons not in good health or not wanting to spend the majority of their time in the field, this tour may be too strenuous. Accommodations vary on this trip, from the beautiful “house” at Tapichalaca Reserve (with a limited number of rooms and shared bathrooms), to lovely new cabins at private Finca Copalinga (no electricity), to very nice hotels in the cities of Loja and Cuenca. Single accommodations may not be available at Tapichalaca and Finca Copalinga.*

*Note that this tour can be taken by itself or in combination with our July 9-17, Ecuador: Amazonia at Napo Wildlife Center tour.*

**July 16, Day 1: Arrival in Quito.** Please plan to arrive in Quito tonight. Upon arrival we'll clear customs and immigration and transfer to our comfortable hotel. We highly recommend arriving a day early if you are concerned about flight delays.

NIGHT: Hotel Sebastian, Quito

**July 17, Day 2: Fly to Cuenca.** This morning we will fly to the beautiful colonial city of Cuenca. Upon our arrival we will be met by our bus and after delivering the luggage to our hotel, we will head straight off to the Laguna Llaviuco section of the El Cajas National Recreation Area. In the lakeside hedgerows and woodlots found in this area, hummingbirds are abundant; the possibilities include Great Sapphirewing, Rainbow Starfrontlet, Purple-throated Sunangel, Mountain Velvetbreast and Sapphire-vented Puffleg. The lagoon itself holds some waterfowl and marsh and grassland species such as Ecuadorian Rail, Andean Teal and Andean Ruddy-Duck, while mixed foraging flocks here in the tree line scrub might include Masked Trogon, Line-cheeked Spinetail, White-throated Tyrannulet, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager, Superciliaried Hemispingus, Blue-and-yellow Tanager and a surprisingly healthy population of Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucans.

NIGHT: Pinar del Rio la Laguna, Cuenca

**July 18, Day 3: Cajas National Recreation Area.** Today we return to the west of Cuenca and to the magnificent Cajas National Recreation Area, an isolated high plateau dominated by a range of jagged, rocky peaks reaching well above treeline. At these elevations birds are limited in variety, but there is no better place in Ecuador to see the paramo specialties and we will spend today searching for them. At timberline (around 10,500 ft), the road enters a broad valley with patches of scrub and the last few farms. Here we may find Andean Lapwing (irregular), Violet-throated Metaltail (a rarely-seen endemic of this one small region), Tawny Antpitta, Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant (a gorgeous flycatcher reminiscent of an Old World rock-thrush), Hooded Siskin, Plain-colored Seedeater and others. At the end of the valley the road quickly ascends to the alpine zone known as the “paramo,” where the slopes are covered in tussock grass and the flats dotted with small lakes and tundra-like bogs where strange plants bloom. Here we will observe the incredible adaptive radiation within the ovenbird (furnariid) family, whose members fill niches which in North America would be occupied by many different families. Among the furnariids likely today are the Stout-billed and Bar-winged cinclodes, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Pearled Treerunner, Mouse-colored Thistletail, and Many-striped Canastero. In a few protected sites there are

isolated stands of *Polylepis* woodland. These are the home of several remarkable birds, tops among them the nuthatch-like Giant Conebill, and the lively Tit-like Dacnis at its only accessible site in Ecuador.

On the highest slopes the vegetation is reduced to tough grasses and matted clumps of scrub that are able to withstand severe wind, drought, solar radiation and frost. Many have especially beautiful flowers and here we may see the fabulous Ecuadorian (Chimborazo) Hillstar, found higher up than any other member of the hummingbird family, plus Blue-mantled Thornbill, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Paramo Ground-Tyrant and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. With decent weather we should spot some of the raptors typical of the high mountains such as Variable Hawk, Carunculated Caracara and Aplomado Falcon. The healthiest remaining population of Andean Condors in Ecuador is found here as well and if fortune smiles on us, we will see this spectacular symbol of Andean wilderness.

NIGHT: Pinar del Rio la Laguna, Cuenca

**July 19, Day 4: Cuenca to Zamora.** Today will be a travel day through the drier interior valleys, making stops to bird at select spots in a variety of habitats ranging from arid scrub and paramo-like grasslands to temperate forest. The scenery is extraordinary as we pass from the dry and barren mountains near Cuenca to the cultivated hills above Loja; the distant vistas, a riot of pastel-colored rocks and soils. Along this stretch we may spot a special raptor like the Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle or Variable Hawk, or find patches of flowers attractive to hummingbirds like the Shining Sunbeam and Black-tailed Trainbearer. We will spend time birding in some wonderful patches of high Andean forest along a side-road at Acanama where we will search for several rare and threatened bird species including Mountain Caracara, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Red-faced Parrot, and Bearded Guan to name a few. Then we continue on as the road traverses a high plateau before dropping into the heavily-settled valley around the small, old city of Loja and then down the eastern Andean slopes into the foothills around the small town of Zamora, nestled in a valley at the confluence of the Zamora and Bombuscaro Rivers.

NIGHT: Finca Copalinga, Zamora\*

*\*Single accommodations may not be available at this small hotel.*

**July 20-21 Days 5-6: Bombuscaro Area (Podocarpus National Park).** In the Zamora area we will stay in beautiful new cabins on a private finca. This is a dream come true for those of us who grew fond of this region when there really wasn't anywhere acceptable to stay in the area. Birds are abundant amidst the gardens, thickets, and second-growth here. This is the heart of "the tanager zone" and a mixed-flock of these colorful and entertaining birds literally comes right around the cabins, perhaps including Paradise, Golden, Blue-necked, Spotted, White-lined, Silver-beaked and Magpie tanagers. Here we should also find a number of tropical zone birds not to be encountered elsewhere on our trip, such as Glittering-throated Emerald, Little Woodpecker, Dark-breasted Spinetail, Lined Antshrike, Golden-winged Tody-Flycatcher, Olive-chested Tyrannulet, Black-billed Thrush, Chestnut-vented Conebill, Chestnut-bellied Seedeater, and Yellow-browed Sparrow. A short distance from Finca Copalinga lies the Bombuscaro entrance to Podocarpus National Park. This park is one of the most important faunal reserves in the Andes, covering a tremendous elevational transect, but it is largely inaccessible. Only in this area can the rich forests of the Upper Tropical zone of the foothills be reached. At the end of the road a wide trail enters the forest—and another world waits. Many of the birds present roam in mixed-species flocks. The tanagers reach their greatest diversity here and it is not unusual to see ten or more species in one good flock, among them such gems as the Orange-eared, Paradise, Green-and-gold, Golden-eared, and Golden tanagers, as well as Yellow-throated and Ashy-throated bush-tanagers. Associated with them are other small passerines, perhaps a furnariid like the Ash-browed Spinetail, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Streaked Xenops or the poorly-known Equatorial Graytail; a Russet Antshrike or Yellow-breasted Antwren; or tyrannids like the Lemon-browed, Ornate, Slaty-capped and Streak-necked flycatchers; or rare Fulvous-breasted Flatbill. It was here, in the summer of 1992, that Paul Coopmans and David Wolf independently discovered a strange *Myiopagis elaeenia* that is now known to be a species new to science, named the Foothill Elaenia. Other special birds possible in this area include Violet-fronted and Black-throated brilliants, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Coppery-

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cheded Jacamar, Black-streaked Puffbird, Lanceolated Monklet, Amazonian Umbrellabird, Fiery-throated Fruiteater (irregular), Olivaceous Greenlet, Golden-collared Honeycreeper, Subtropical Cacique, and Olivaceous Siskin. Unique to the region is the White-breasted Parakeet, a rare bird of very limited range and irregular occurrence. Occasional Torrent Ducks and White-capped Dippers are found along the rushing boulder-strewn river. Our two days in this area are bound to be full of excitement.

NIGHTS: Finca Copalinga, Zamora\*

*\*Single accommodations may not be available at this small hotel.*

**July 22, Day 7: Zamora; to Tapichalaca.** Leaving the Bombuscaro area early this morning, we will travel upslope to work the zone just above Zamora along the “old” Zamora-Loja road. This is still tanager country and if we can find a good mixed-flock here we will have a better shot at the Blue-browed, Metallic-green, Golden-naped and Vermilion tanagers, plus Cliff Flycatcher, Gray-mantled Wren and others. After we have had our fill of this very rich area, we will continue on upslope and over the pass, where there is habitat all the way up to the elfin forest and paramo at the pass at 9,000 ft. above Loja. We will then continue southward en route to our next destination, winding through the famous Vilcabamba valley in the dry interior before reaching a higher and wetter pass at 9,000 ft. Second-growth and patches of forest remain near the road and sample stops will introduce us to some of the birds typical of the high Andean forests. We could see a Masked Trogon or band of Turquoise Jays, or a mixed-flock with Lacrimose and Buff-breasted mountain-tanagers, Citrine Warbler, Spectacled Redstart, Blue-backed Conebill or Grass-green Tanager. Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Mouse-colored Thistletail and Glossy Flowerpiercer occur in the bizarre stunted forest right at the pass, but be forewarned: it is often foggy, rainy and windy here at the top of the ridge! The privately-owned Tapichalaca Reserve is located below this pass, on the east slope at about 6,800 ft., and by the time we arrive at the beautiful wood lodge we will have seen a remarkable range of birds, habitats, and scenery.

The story of the Jocotoco Antpitta and the Tapichalaca Reserve is remarkable in its own right. This spectacular bird was completely new to science when, in November 1997, Robert Ridgely and others stumbled onto one at this site. This very distinctive species was one of the most remarkable bird discoveries of the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it was immediately realized that the area was under threat from logging and de-forestation for pasture, and that the new species must be considered endangered. The solution was to buy the entire area and hire the former farmers as wardens. Thus began the Jocotoco Foundation, now actively and successfully engaged in preserving the habitat of this and other critically endangered birds throughout Ecuador. The Reserve here has grown in size and an attractive lodge was built to allow observers to stay on site. Staying here allows us to wake up right in the habitat for numerous special birds, and supports the mission of the Foundation, but please note that singles probably will not be available here and bathroom facilities are shared in some cases.

NIGHT: Jocotoco Lodge, Tapichalaca Reserve\*

*\*Single Accommodations may not be available at this small lodge. Depending on the number of tour participants, the group may stay instead at a hotel in nearby Vilcabamba.*

**July 23, Day 8: Tapichalaca Reserve.** Surrounding the Jocotoco Lodge is beautiful temperate cloud forest with a dense under story of bamboo and shrubs, the only habitat for the few pairs of Jocotoco Antpittas known to exist. The closest territory is hardly more than 100 yards from the lodge, but be aware that this species is very difficult to see and our chances of spotting it are only fair at best. Needless to say, a wealth of other scarce birds of the eastern slope are present in the reserve. Bearded Guan and Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan have been seen right around the lodge on occasion, while the forest trails are excellent for seeing some of the skulkers, such as Rufous Spinetail; Chestnut-naped, Rufous and Slate-crowned antpittas; Ocellated, Ash-colored and Chusquea tapaculos; Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant; Black-throated Tody-Tyrant; Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant; Rufous and Plain-tailed wrens; and Rufous-naped and Pale-naped brush-finches. Typical in the mixed-flocks here are Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Orange-banded Flycatcher (a range-restricted species), Barred

Beard, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Blue-and-black Tanager, and Black-capped Hemispingus. The rarely-seen Golden-plumed Parakeet has been known to nest in the area, while Scaly-naped Amazons often pass overhead on their daily commute. The active hummingbird feeders at the lodge are dominated by Chestnut-breasted Coronets, but Amethyst-throated and Flame-throated sunangels are also numerous, while rarer visitors include Glowing Puffleg and Rufous-capped Thornbill.

A short distance down the road from the Reserve the habitat changes subtly and one enters the subtropical zone. Forest is patchy along here, but the remaining bits and pieces can be very good for mixed-flocks, which seem to become especially active when the clouds cover the higher elevations. The flocks are dominated by a dazzling array of tanagers, perhaps including Flame-faced, Saffron-crowned, Beryl-spangled, Metallic-green, and Blue-winged Mountain with birds like foliage-gleaners, Montane Woodcreeper, White-tailed and Sulphur-bellied tyrannulets, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Russet-crowned Warbler, Bluish Flowerpiercer, and Northern Mountain-Cacique tagging along. To experience a huge mixed-flock in the subtropics is one of the supreme joys—or utmost frustrations—of Neotropical birding. Sometimes the flocks are hard to locate, and then the light is poor and the birds move off rapidly in the wrong direction. At other times, however, they linger and forage deliberately, a visual feast as one species after another comes into view. The diversity of hummingbirds is also high in this zone and they can be spotted zipping around from the canopy to the under story. With such a profusion of flowers to choose from they are not concentrated, but eventually we should get good looks at some of the species possible, including Tawny-bellied Hermit, Speckled Hummingbird, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, and Long-tailed Sylph.

NIGHT: Jocotoco Lodge, Tapichalaca Reserve\*

*\*Single Accommodations may not be available at this small lodge. Depending on the number of tour participants, the group may stay instead at a hotel in nearby Vilcabamba.*

**July 24, Day 9: Tapichalaca Reserve; Catamayo Valley and Loja.** After a final morning birding the Tapichalaca area, we will travel back through the city of Loja and then down into the arid Catamayo valley, also known as La Toma, in the arid foothills where we will spend several hours birding the irrigated farms and dry scrub in this area. Few of the birds present here will have been seen elsewhere on the trip and possibilities include Pacific Parrotlet, Purple-collared Woodstar, Loja Hummingbird, Elegant Crescentchest, Collared Antshrike, Superciliated Wren, Long-tailed Mockingbird, Parrot-billed and Dull-colored seedeaters, Collared Warbling-Finch, Band-tailed Sierra-Finch and Tumbes Sparrow. We will return to our hotel in Loja sometime in the late afternoon.

NIGHT: Hotel Libertador, Loja

**July 25, Day 10: Cajanuma (Podocarpus National Park).** Not far from Loja the narrow dirt road to the Cajanuma station of Podocarpus National Park climbs onto a ridge of the Andes, suddenly rounding a bend and passing from denuded hillsides into temperate forest right along the roadside. The emergent trees here are twisted into fantastic shapes by the steep slopes and frequent wind and mist, their branches covered in a heavy load of epiphytes. Younger trees and bushes create a thick under story and patches of bamboo form impenetrable thickets. A surprising number of birds live in this habitat, many of them very poorly known, and this area should produce a number of surprises. Specialties known from here include the Bearded Guan (endangered), Golden-headed Quetzal, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Powerful Woodpecker and Barred Fruiteater. None of these are easy to see, but our chances are good. The mixed-flocks zipping through the trees and shrubbery might include Bar-bellied Woodpecker; Rufous-breasted Chat-Tyrant; Mountain Wren; Glossy-black Thrush; Citrine and Russet-crowned warblers; Blue-backed Conebill; Golden-crowned, Red-hooded and Grass-green tanagers (all of them stunning!); Scarlet-bellied, Lacrimose and Hooded mountain-tanagers; Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager; Black-headed Hemispingus; Plush-capped Finch; and several small flycatchers. Hummingbirds are seasonally numerous and we may find such gems as Sword-billed Hummingbird, Mountain Velvetbreast, Collared Inca, Rainbow Starfrontlet, Purple-throated Sunangel, and Purple-backed Thornbill. On clear days the occasional raptor passes over, such as Black-and-Chestnut Eagle, Solitary Eagle or White-throated Hawk.

The road ends at a picnic area at 9,000 feet, where several trails enter the incredibly lush forest along the upper part of the ridge. Birds are notoriously difficult to see inside this forest, but this is a great place to spot some of the skulkers of the bamboo and dense under story. We may be lucky enough to see an antpitta hopping down the trail (five species are found here) or call up an obscure tapaculo. Near tree line the trees are gnarled and stunted by the constant wind and mist, forming an elfin moss forest with an impenetrable bamboo under story. Birds are scarce in this zone and only the stronger hikers may want to go this far up the trail, but it is here that several great rarities have been found, including the Neblina Metaltail and the gorgeous Black-chested and Masked mountain-tanagers (we would be extremely lucky to see either of these).

NIGHT: Hotel Libertador, Loja

**July 26, Day 11: Flight to Quito.** This morning we will take an early flight back to Quito. After settling into our hotel, you will have the rest of the day to explore this wonderful city, declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO. This evening we will meet for our farewell dinner.

NIGHT: Hotel Sebastian, Quito

**July 27, Day 12: Departure for Home.** Transfers will be provided to the Quito airport in time for the morning departures of American Airlines at 8:00 a.m. to Miami or Continental Airlines at 7:40 a.m. to Houston.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS:** Paul Greenfield and David Wolf

**Paul Greenfield** grew up near New York City and became interested in birds as a child. He received his B.F.A. from Temple University where he was an art major at the Tyler School of Art. Since 1972, he has lived in Ecuador where his fascination for birds and art has culminated with the completion of 20 years of work illustrating *The Birds of Ecuador*, which he co-authored with Robert Ridgely. Paul is very involved in saving Ecuador's avian diversity and important habitats through his involvement with various foundations, as well as working with local government and communities to encourage their involvement in the protection of "their" biodiversity and the promotion of birding tourism in Ecuador. He has been showing visitors the birds of this fascinating country for over two decades and has led many Ecuador bird tours. He and his wife, Martha, live in Quito.

**David Wolf** is a senior member of the VENT staff and one of our most experienced tour leaders. After birding the U.S. and Mexico for over a decade, an interest in the wildlife of Africa led him to Kenya in 1975 where he spent over a year studying the birds and other wildlife of the African continent. Soon after his return to Texas he began leading Rockport Wildlife Weekends for VENT, at that time a new company, and he hasn't looked back since. In addition to Africa, David has extensive birding and tour-leading experience in North America and the Neotropics. He unites great birding skills with a wide-ranging interest in all aspects of natural history. David and his wife, Mimi, live in Nacogdoches, Texas, with assorted horses, cats, and dogs. They have two adult children, Matt and Elena.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is **\$3075** per person in double occupancy from Quito. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 11, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground and air transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Quito and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$345**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. This fee does not cover nor guarantee single accommodations at Finca Copalinga (Days 4-6) and Jocotoco Lodge (Days 7-8)

and you may be asked to share. However, if single accommodations are available, they will be provided for you at no additional cost.

Those combining this tour with Ecuador: Amazonia at Napo Wildlife Center (July 9-17, 2008) will be provided with a combined tour discount of **\$100** in double occupancy and **\$135** in single occupancy.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for the tour is **\$500** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refunds are made according to the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$125 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$125.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

**TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE:** Application forms for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available, however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**BAGGAGE:** We request you limit your luggage to one suitcase or duffel bag and one carry-on bag while on tour. As a precaution, pack your binoculars, a change of clothes, walking shoes, medications, toiletries and travel documents in the carry-on. Because this tour visits a variety of climates, you may feel the need to bring more with you than you really need. Laundry service is available at the city hotels on the tour.

**CLIMATE:** During the tour we will experience a wide variety of altitudes and a considerable range of temperatures. The mountains are generally pleasant during the day, cool to warm, and occasionally almost hot (in the foothills). However, at higher elevations the temperatures may be as low as the 40's on occasion (quite chilly, especially if foggy or misty). There is a strong likelihood that we will be out in mist or light rain at times.

**CLOTHING:** Bring a warm jacket or sweater, layers, and thermal underwear for the cool high-mountain locations; if you know that you are "cold-blooded" you should also bring gloves and a warm cap. Lightweight field clothing (combined with a jacket or sweater for the early morning) is the norm for most areas visited, including one or more pair of khaki or other field pants along with a couple of long-sleeved shirts of lightweight material,

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preferably in dark colors that do not scare the birds and that provide additional protection from both the sun and biting insects. Clothing that you can wash yourself and which dries quickly is preferred. Layering is a good idea; you can begin the morning with a thermal shirt, outer shirt, sweater and jacket if need be, and then shed layers as the day warms up. Good footwear is essential, as we will do quite a bit of walking. Much of it will be on gravel roads, but we also enter the forest on trails, and for this we strongly suggest sturdy mud boots, or waterproof hiking boots. In any case your footwear for the field should be very water-resistant, as this is a damp climate and even the roadside grass will get your feet wet! There is likely to be some rain, so please bring a folding umbrella and rain jacket or poncho. Dress is casual and informal throughout. You may find sandals or flip-flops useful for wear in your lodge rooms.

**CURRENCY:** The U.S. dollar is the currency in Ecuador. Cash is needed only for your personal expenses, such as bar bills, laundry, and souvenirs. It is strongly advised that most of your money be in U.S. traveler's checks, with a smaller amount of currency in U.S. Dollars. MasterCard, Visa, American Express, and Diner's Club are widely accepted in Quito.

**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Ecuador is required. Visas are not required for United States citizens. You will be issued a tourist card to be completed on board your flight to Quito. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, raingear, extra film, etc.). You will need an alarm clock; umbrella and poncho for protection from the rain; a flashlight or headlamp and extra batteries; and a washcloth. Sunglasses, sunhat and sunscreen will be needed for protection from the sun. Chiggers and no-see-ums can be a problem in some areas. We recommend the use of Cutter's lotion (plastic squeeze bottles) and a pump-style container of OFF. Topsy gel is useful in reducing irritation from bites and stings, and some cortisone creams are now available without prescription. Your leaders will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

**HEALTH:** Yellow fever vaccination is recommended, as well as polio and tetanus. Malaria is present in Ecuador, including the chloroquine-resistant strain and malaria prophylaxis is recommended. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (877) FYI-TRIP. You can check the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

As in most Latin American countries, we recommend drinking only bottled water and using no ice in beverages. Avoid milk products that have not been pasteurized, as well as unpeeled fruits and vegetables.

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

**MISC:** Departure Tax - \$35 USD (subject to change without notice)  
Electricity - 110 volts AC, the same as the U.S.  
Language - Spanish, with Quechua or Indian dialects; some English  
Time - Eastern Standard Time

**SUGGESTED READING:**

Our website at [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).

***Birds, Basic Field Guides:***

Ridgely, Robert S. and Paul Greenfield. *The Birds of Ecuador: Field Guide (Vol II)*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001. This is the primary field guide for use in Ecuador and thoroughly covers the entire avifauna of the country.

Hilty, Steven L. and William L. Brown. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. This classic field guide covers 80-90 % of the species found in this region.

***Birds, Reference:***

Ridgely, Robert S. and Paul Greenfield. *The Birds of Ecuador: Status, Distribution and Taxonomy (Vol I)*. This is the companion volume to the field guide. It goes into greater depth on ranges and taxonomy of the birds, but it is not necessary to carry this one with you (there are range maps in the Field Guide).

Fjeldsa, Jon and Niels Krabbe. *Birds of the High Andes*. Apollo Books, 1980. A good reference to study, but not needed as a field guide, plus it is expensive and may be difficult to obtain.

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelburne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd, 1994. Subtitle: "A Watcher's Introduction to Behavior, Breeding and Diversity." A very readable and informative book on the general ecology of birds in the New World tropics, with specific examples drawn from the montane avifauna.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *Birds of South America Volume I, the Oscine Passerines*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989. A very useful reference with a great text and offering alternative illustrations.

Ridgely, Robert S. and Guy Tudor. *Birds of South America Volume II, the Suboscine Passerines*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. A very useful reference with a great text and offering alternative illustrations.

Hilty, Steven L. and William L. Brown. 1986. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. By far the most useful bird book for Ecuador, with excellent coverage of birds in the eastern lowlands and northern mountains. For birds of southwestern Ecuador see Meyer de Schauensee, and Koepcke (below).

Fjeldsa, Jon and Niels Krabbe. 1990. *Birds of the High Andes*. Apollo Books. Expensive and hard to find; well illustrated (illustrations quite small), good reference but heavy.

Ridgely, Robert S., and Guy Tudor. 1989. *Birds of South America Volume I, The Oscine Passerines: Jays, Swallows, Wrens, Thrushes and Allies, Vireos, Wood-warblers, Tanagers, Icterids and Finches*. Very useful reference, with range maps and illustrations of many species not previously illustrated.

Ridgely, Robert S., and Guy Tudor. 1994. *Birds of South America Volume II, The Suboscine Passerines: Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers, Antbirds, Gnateaters, and Tapaculos, Tyrant Flycatchers, Manakins and*

*Cotingas*. Very useful reference, with range maps and illustrations of many species not previously illustrated.

***Background Reference: Birds***

Hilty, Steven. 1994. *Birds of Tropical America*. Chapters Publishing Ltd., Shelburne, VT. A great introduction to various aspects of the ecology of Neotropical birds.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, and drivers) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel that one or both of your VENT leaders, or any local guides and drivers, have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

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