

Itinerary for the Birds of Northern Ecuador
Sept. 16 – 30, 2010
Mark Pretti Nature Tours, L.L.C.

Day 1 – Sept. 16 - travel to Quito (2850m). From the airport, you'll take a taxi to La Casa Sol, a comfortable B&B about 15-20 mins. away - www.lacasasol.com. The taxi should cost about \$10-12 at most (maybe less), and the address is Calama 127 and Avenida 6 de Diciembre in the Mariscal district. The taxi driver will know the spot. Most flights from the states arrive in the late evening, but there are a few earlier options for arrival times. You'll need to make the arrangements that work best for you. You may have a bit of a wait in the customs line, 30-45 mins., but no wait for a taxi.

Day 2 and 3 - Sept. 17 & 18 - after breakfast at 7:30 AM, we'll leave by 8-8:15 and head west to Tinalandia Lodge (600m) – www.tinalandia.com - about 2.5 hours away. Upon arrival we'll have time to do some birding and get a feel for the habitat before lunch. We'll have the afternoon to explore this typically very birdy place as we search for masked water-tyrant, spectacled owl, white-throated crake, crimson-rumped toucanet, red-headed and orange-fronted barbets, black-winged saltator, yellow-tufted dacnis, orange-billed sparrow, pallid dove, scrub blackbird, scale-crested pygmy-tyrant, stripe-headed woodcreeper, dusky-faced tanager, Pacific parrotlet, maroon-tailed parakeet, rufous and broad-billed motmots, green-crowned brilliant, and many others.

On our second day at Tinalandia we'll take it fairly easy as we have all day to enjoy this unique location where we'll see quite a few things we won't see elsewhere. Please note that the cabanas at Tinalandia are about a half-mile uphill from the restaurant. We'll have a van and will make most of our walks in the downhill direction, and, of course, we'll have a ride back up after dinner.

Day 4 - Sept. 19 – We have a lot to do today and will be making an early start. After packing up early and making the downhill drive to the restaurant, we'll have breakfast about 5:15-5:30 AM and try to be on the road by 6-6:15 as we'll need to drive a bit over an hour to reach the Rio Silanche Reserve (300-350m), a 200-acre sanctuary in the Choco region – www.mindocloudforest.org. Gentle trails and a 50-ft. canopy tower provide great opportunities for seeing some of the special birds of the area. Here we'll look for dusky pigeon, bronze-winged parrot, blue-whiskered, grey and gold, and rufous-winged tanagers, barred puffbird, chestnut-backed, immaculate, and bicolored antbirds, Choco trogon and toucan, white-bearded manakin, black-striped woodcreeper, and, with great luck, maybe long-wattled umbrellabird or plumbeous hawk. Hopefully we'll be treated to several large mixed flocks while there.

From Silanche, we'll drive for about an hour to the Hostal Restaurante Mirador del Rio Blanco in the small town of San Miguel de Los Bancos (1100m) where we'll have lunch and enjoy their sometimes very productive feeders – velvet-purple coronet, green thorntail, green-crowned woodnymph, and long-billed starthroat are hummer highlights while crimson-rumped toucanet and golden, silver-throated, rufous-throated, and flame-

faced tanagers may be at the bananas. After lunch we'll make a 15 min. drive to the Milpe Reserve (1100m) where we'll make a short visit. The 155-acre reserve has an information center, gift shop, orchid nursery, hummingbird feeders and various trails. We'll spend most of our time on the easier trails and perhaps some time on the entrance road. Milpe is a good spot for white-thighed swallow, golden-headed quetzal, purple-bibbed whitetip, club-winged manakin, ornate flycatcher, Guayaquil woodpecker, brown-billed scythebill, scaly-throated foliage-gleaner, glistening-green tanager, and more. From Milpe, we'll drive about 30 mins to Septimo Paraiso Lodge – www.septimoparaiso.com – hopefully arriving in time to enjoy the feeders before dinner.

Day 5 - Sept. 20 – After breakfast at 6, we'll stay close to home, walking the lodge's trails in the morning and maybe making an afternoon visit to some nearby roads around Mindo. We'll have all of our meals at the lodge. We'll have opportunities for all sorts of birds including pale-mandibled aracari, many tanager species (golden, blue-necked, lemon-rumped, beryl-spangled, and others), crimson-mantled woodpecker, toucan barbet, yellow tyrannulet, and, of course, many hummers – white-whiskered hermit, violet-tailed sylph, booted racket-tail, purple-throated woodstar, buff-tailed coronet, and others.

Day 6 - Sept. 21 – Today we need to make an early start, leaving about 5:15-5:30 AM for the Angel Paz Reserve. Perhaps you've heard the amazing story of this local farmer who has "tamed" four species of antpitta – giant, moustached, yellow-breasted, and ochre-breasted. Typically secretive and difficult to see, the antpitta show at Angel's will seem like a miracle. While we should see the three larger species, the diminutive ochre-breasted can be tough. He also has fruit feeders where toucan barbets, crimson-rumped toucanets, sickle-winged guans, several mountain tanagers, and olivaceous piha are regular eye-level, close-up visitors. His hummer feeders are noteworthy for empress brilliant, and I almost forgot to mention the opening act, a lek of Andean cock-of-the-rock.

After our visit to Angel's (which includes a late breakfast, though we'll have something earlier), we'll return to Septimo Paraiso to pack, after which we'll make a short drive of about 30 mins. to Mindo Loma for lunch. Mindo Loma has great hummer feeders, with another chance for empress brilliant as well as many velvet-purple coronets and long-tailed sylph. Their banana feeders attract blue-winged and black-chinned mountain tanagers, golden-naped tanager, and other fruit eaters. From Mindo Loma we'll take another 30 min drive to Tandayapa Lodge – www.tandayapa.com – where we'll have time to enjoy their feeders and maybe do a short walk before dinner.

Day 7 – Sept. 22 – The Tandayapa Valley is a well-known birding spot with excellent cloudforest and superb elevational diversity. In this area we have chance to see a huge number of birds, including montane woodcreeper, plate-billed mountain toucan, golden-headed and crested quetzals, dusky bush-tanager, capped conebill, masked trogon, Azara's spinetail, streaked tuftedcheek, white-tailed tyrannulet, glossy-black thrush, blue-winged mountain-tanager, white-winged brushfinch, spectacled whitestart, rufous-chested tanager, plain-tailed wren, and countless others. Hummers include Andean emerald, collared inca, and tawny-bellied hermit. We'll have several options during our

stay at Tandayapa. We'll likely spend one early morning at their 'bug blind', enjoy the trails and feeders at the lodge, and spend some time higher up near Bella Vista Lodge, looking for some higher elevation species.

Day 8 - Sept. 23 – After breakfast, we'll spend the morning on the grounds of Tandayapa, enjoying their feeders and trails. We'll plan to leave between 11 and 11:30 AM with a packed lunch as we head towards Quito and the east slope of the Andes. It will take a little over 4 hours to reach Guango Lodge where we'll spend 2 nights – www.cabanasanisidro.com. At 2700 meters, Guango is in temperate forest, and their hot soup will be greatly appreciated at mealtime. After arrival we should have plenty of time to enjoy the hummer feeders which are THE place for sword-billed hummingbird as well as chestnut-breasted coronet, white-bellied woodstar, speckled hummingbird, tyrian metaltail, tourmaline sunangel, and fawn-breasted brilliant. The adjacent Papallacta River is one of the best spots for white-capped dipper, torrent tyrannulet, and the fascinating torrent duck. Patchy forest around the lodge is excellent for mountain tanagers (lacrimose, scarlet-bellied, buff-breasted, and hooded), brushfinches (slaty, pale-naped, chestnut-capped, and stripe-headed), chat-tyrants (rufous-breasted and slaty-backed), white-banded tyrannulet, blue-backed and capped conebills, gray-hooded bush-tanager, black-capped and black-eared hemispingus, plushcap, black-crested warbler, northern mountain cacique, mountain wren, and with some luck, maybe dusky piha. They have a 'tame' chestnut-crowned antpitta on the grounds, too.

Day 9 - Sept. 24 - We'll spend the morning at Guango, looking for and enjoying the species mentioned above. In the afternoon, depending on the weather and how lucky we feel, we'll make an optional trip up to Papallacta Pass. The pass itself, about 35 mins. away, is just over 4000 meters. If the weather looks promising, i.e. if it's not pouring rain, sleeting, or a cloudy white-out with gale-force winds, we'll head higher up towards some microwave towers. Along the way we'll have chances to see variable hawk, tawny antpitta, and Andean lapwing and teal, but we'll try to get to the top as quickly as possible to look for a beautiful, bizarre, and often hard to find gem, the rufous-bellied seedsnipe. Heavy-duty layers, including mittens and hat, are needed as the winds can be rather fierce. On the way down we'll stop at a few spots where we've had good luck with Eucadorian hillstar, Andean tit-spinetail, many-striped canastero, brown-backed chat-tyrant, plumbeous sierra-finch, and both bar-winged and stout-billed cinclodes.

Days 10, 11, and 12 - Sept. 25, 26, & 27 - We'll have another pre-breakfast outing and depart about 9:30-10 AM for Cabanas San Isidro (2000m) where we'll spend three nights. We'll be well taken care of at San Isidro as the rooms are excellent and the food is to-die-for. San Isidro lies at the transition between temperate and subtropical forests and picks up species from both. In addition to the productive grounds, with hummer feeders, there are several trails, as well as the entrance road, to explore. Birds are numerous and include pale-edged flycatcher, wattled guan (rare and hard to see, but we should at least hear its unusual evening call), white-capped parrot, bronzy and collared incas, rufous-bellied nighthawk, crested quetzal, highland motmot, inca jay, yellow-vented woodpecker, pearled treerunner, long-tailed antbird, white-bellied antpitta (there's a tame one here), variegated bristle-tyrant, rufous-crowned tody and flavescens

flycatchers, black-chested fruiteater, black-billed peppershrike, barred becard, pale-eyed thrush, black-capped and saffron-crowned tanagers, bluish flowerpiercer, subtropical cacique, and a soon-to-be-described owl (the San Isidro owl) that appears to be intermediate between black-and-white of the west slope and black-banded of lowland Amazonia.

We'll spend one day at the nearby (about 30 mins. away) Guacamayos Ridge (1800m) which has beautiful forest and a few species we might not see at San Isidro. Possibilities include yellow-whiskered bush-tanager, dusky piha, black-billed mountain toucan, golden-eyed flowerpiercer, and with great luck, maybe greater scythebill.

We'll bring a packed lunch and, after our visit to Guacamayos Ridge, continue east for about one hour to the lower elevations of the Jocotoco Foundation's Narupa Reserve at 1100 meters. Here we'll find an almost entirely new suite of eastern foothill and lowland species, including dusky spinetail, coppery-chested jacamar, and others.

Day 13 - Sept. 28 – We'll have another half-day at San Isidro and will return to Quito after lunch. The trip back is about 3 hours. Depending on the time and the weather, we may be able to make a stop or two before arriving in Quito to look for a few central valley species. We'll arrive in Quito about 5 PM and take a break before dinner.

Day 14 - Sept. 29 –After breakfast at 7:30, and with every layer of clothing we have, we'll try to leave by 8 for the Antisana Reserve. The reserve, much of which will be above 12,000 ft., will take us from the upper limits of cloud forest through elfin forest and then into the high paramo. It takes a bit over an hour to get to our first stop. We'll bring a packed lunch, and make multiple stops on our way to the end of the road at Laguna Micacocha. Along our route, in addition to experiencing spectacular scenery (and maybe views of the Antisana volcano), we'll have good chances to see Ecuadorian hillstar, giant hummingbird, green-tailed trainbearer, red-crested cotinga, cinereous harrier, aplomado falcon, carunculated caracara, yellow-billed pintail, paramo pipit, paramo ground-tyrant, plumbeous Sierra-finch, silvery grebe, and Andean condor, gull, coot, teal, lapwing and ruddy duck. We'll return to La Casa Sol in the late afternoon for dinner and our final night.

Day 15 - Sept. 30 – For those returning to the states today, we'll arrange for taxis the evening before and will be ready to head to the airport at the necessary times. For particularly early flights (as most are), breakfast will not be available at La Casa Sol, but there is food at the airport or at small markets near the hotel. **As of November, 2009, the airport departure tax is \$41.00 which must be paid in cash.** There are ATMs at the airport. After you check in with the airline, you'll go to the left side of the room to the departure tax booths. After paying the tax you'll head up the obvious central staircase to your gate.

- **Communication** – If you need to call home, I recommended bringing a prepaid calling card. I've used an MCI card successfully in many Latin American countries. Be sure to get the access number for Ecuador from the provider before departure. Depending on how much you'll be calling, I recommend a card with about \$20-30 on it. Please note that we won't always be in locations where international calls can be made. Except for La Casa Sol in Quito there will be NO internet access during the trip.

Contact Information

La Casa Sol, Quito
Calama 127 y Avenida 6 de Diciembre
593 2 223-0798 or info@lacasasol.com
www.lacasasol.com

Hacienda Tinalandia
011 593 2 244 9028 or cell, 099467741
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www.tinalandia.com

Septimo Paraiso Hosteria, Mindo
Quito, 011 593 2 289 3160, Mindo, 09 368 4420
info@septimoparaiso.com
www.septimoparaiso.com

Tandayapa Lodge
011 593 2 244 7520, cell 593-9-923-1314
tandayapa@tropicalbirding.com
www.tandayapa.com

Cabanas San Isidro and Guango Lodge
Carmen or Irene Bustamante
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www.cabanasanisidro.com

- **Elevations** – many birds in Ecuador are range restricted by elevation. Though this is true everywhere, it is particularly useful for identification in Ecuador and used extensively in the field guide. We'll be at the following elevations;

Quito – 2850m = 9350 ft.

Tinalandia – 600m = 2000 ft.

Silanche – 350m = 1200 ft.

Los Bancos and Milpe – 1100m = 3600 ft.

Septimo Paraiso / Mindo / Angel Paz – 1400m = 4500 ft.

Tandayapa Lodge – 2100m = 6600ft.

Papallacta Pass – 4270m = 14,000 ft.

Guango Lodge – 2700m = 8870 ft.

San Isidro Lodge – 2000m = 6560 ft.

Guacamayas Ridge – 1800m = 5900 ft.

Narupa Reserve – 1100m = 3500 ft.

Antisana Reserve – 4000m = 13,000 ft