

Ecuador - Cock-of-the-Rock

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 - 15 November 2009



Giant Antpitta



Yellow-breasted Antpitta



Booted Racketed-tail



Toucan Barbet

Report compiled by Edwin Perez

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Day 1

Saturday 7th November

Weather: sunny. Trail conditions: Easy.

The guests (Vivian and Rodney) arrived at 9:10am to Quito, the capital of Ecuador, located at an altitude of 2800 m above sea level. At 10:00 am we drove to Yanacocha, near volcan Pichincha and the last refuge of the official bird of Quito, the Black-breasted Puffleg. This patch of mountain forest is protected and run by the Jocotoco Foundation, one of the most important projects in bird conservation after the discovery of the stunning Jocotoco Antpitta. We got there around 11:30 am after birding en route on the road that connects Quito to Yanacocha. Lunch was at 12:00 pm, then we went to walk on the trocha trail, spotting birds like Glossy Flowerpiercer, Black Flowerpiercer, Smoky Bush-tyrant, and Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanager. We left the area around 15:30 pm and returned to Quito at 16:30 pm to stay at the Hotel Embassy.

Day 2

Sunday 8th November

Weather: Sunny to overcast all day. Trail conditions: Easy.

We departed from the hotel at 6:00am towards the northwest of Quito to the Maquipucuna reserve, taking the old road via Nono, Nanegalito, passing by Yanacocha, looking how the vegetation changes, gradually starting with an elevation of 2800m above sea level, then getting to the highest point of the route in Yanacocha at 3,400m above sea level. We drove to the cloud forest before getting to our destination and birding in the mountain forest where we got some species like Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tyrian Metaltail, Black-chested Mountain-tanager, and Turquoise Jay.

We had lunch at 12:30pm in the Yanacocha area and after lunch we drove on the old road to Maquipucuna with more stops and leaving the cold weather to get to the warm... and finding more species of birds, like Masked Trogon, Sickle-winged Guan, Tricolored Brush-finch, Spectacled Whitestart, Slate-throated Whitestart, Brown-capped Vireo, Pale-mandibled Arasari, and Choco Toucan. Our last stop was Maquipucuna cloud forest reserve, at 18:10 pm.

Day 3

Monday 9th November

Weather: Sunny all day. Trail conditions easy to moderate.

We had breakfast at 5:15 am and starting watching birds at 6:00am in the gardens of the reserve, getting some spectacular birds like Torrent Duck, Purple-throated Woodstar, Brown Violetear, and Rufous Motmot. Maquipucuna has an extraordinary biodiversity of mammals, and close to 4% of the worlds' bird diversity, making it a paradise for bird watchers. The reserve is located two hours away from Quito, the altitudinal range of Maquipucuna stretching from 900 meters to almost 2700 meters above sea level, making this a cloud forest ecosystem. We continued looking for more birds and we walked the main trail, and we worked hard to get views of some birds, while some others were almost tame! We saw Immaculate Antbird, Uniform Antshrike, Cinnamon Becard, White-winged Becard, Black-and-white Becard, Ornate Flycatcher, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, and Broad-billed Motmot, amongst others. We got back to the lodge to have lunch at 12:00 pm.

At 13:30pm we travelled towards Santa Lucia Reserve getting to the border between Maquipucuna and Santa Lucia and after 100 meters walk on a trail we found probably the bird of the trip- Crested Quetzal, and another fascinating bird Toucan Barbet in the same spot! We also saw Golden-headed Quetzal. We walked along the road back to the lodge finding more species like Masked Tytyra, Blue-necked Tanager, and Red-faced Spinetail. We finished our day at 18:15 pm, before having our dinner and retiring to bed.

Day 4

Tuesday 10th November

Weather: Sunny all day. Trail conditions: Moderate to difficult.

At a very early 3:45am we had some coffee and tea with fruit and quimbolito (traditional Ecuadorian cuisine - a sort of cake wrapped in a banana leaf), leaving Maquipucuna at 4:00am toward Paz De Las Aves reserve in the mindo area. This place has become very well known in the bird world due to the easy way you can get to see at least three species of antpitta - as close as you can imagine! Angel Paz is the owner of this magical patch of land and he is the antpitta man! After leaving the main road about 1 kilometre from the entrance to the welcoming area we had a nice view of a Common Potoo snatching insects at dawn. We got the reserve at 5:30am where Angel was waiting for us - then we walked for 45 minutes to admire the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock lek. During our 1 hour and 45 minute walk we found birds like Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Chesnut-capped Brush-finch and some others.

We got to the spot where María (Giant Antpitta) comes to eat, and after a couple of minutes Maria with her son Carino appeared! We left Maria enjoying her food and walked in a trail down hill near a stream where Willy (Yellow-breasted Antpitta) came to eat. After Willy, Susan (Moustached Antpitta) was making a show for us nearby. After watching the three species of antpitta so far we went to the spot where the hardest one Shakira (Ochre-breasted Antpitta) shows up at times, but Shakira did not come today, Angel said that she was giving a concert somewhere else...

We got back to the welcoming area to have breakfast and also got to see Dark-backed Wood-quail. We finished the morning around 11:15 am, driving toward Los Bancos to Mirador del Rio, doing more bird watching in the old road in the mindo area, and getting the lodge at 17:00 pm, with dinner at 19:00 pm.

Day 5

Wednesday 11th November

Weather: sunny all day. Trail conditions: Easy.

We started at 5:50 am, watching the hummingbird and tanager feeders, with breakfast at 6:30 am and then left for Milpe bird sanctuary, less than 60 miles from Quito and at 3600 ft (1100 m) above sea level, Milpe protects Andean upper foothill forest in the Choco lowlands. This protected area is managed by Mindo Cloud Forest Foundation where there is a lek of Club-winged Manakin. On the trail at Milpe we saw Golden-winged Manakin, Spotted Woodcreeper, and Ecuadorian Thrush. We left the trail and went to the Milpe gravel road with more views of different species like Band-backed Wren, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, Barred Puffbird and others. Then we went back to the lodge to have lunch at 12: 00 pm.

At 13:00 pm we returned to Quito taking the eco-route or Nono Mindo old road, and seeing Plate-billed Mountain Toucan and Gorgeted Sunangel. After stopping in the Calacali area we added more species to our list including the really difficult White-tailed Shrike-tyrant, Chesnut-crowned Antpitta, and Rufous-chested Tanager. We got to our hotel Fuente De Pidra at 5:45 pm.

Day 6

Thursday 12th November

Weather: sunny all day.

Leaving the hotel at 6:00 am we headed to Guango Lodge located in the eastern foothills. Our first stop was in Tumbaco, a nice valley with a kind of dry shrubby ecosystem, where we saw Giant Hummingbird, Scrub Tanager, and Blue-and-yellow Tanager. We continued driving to the Papallacta pass and our second stop of the morning, after a 30 minute drive, was in the Papallacta area where the spectacular Andean Condor came to say “welcome to the paramo!”. After this we went to one of the highest points of Ecuador inside the Cayambe Coca National Park (14.000 ft or 4.300 metres). Our target was the elusive and well camouflaged Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, we looked for it but had no luck, so we decided to continue with our trip to Guango Lodge but on the way back to take the paved road we saw Ecuadorian Hillstar, Paramo Ground-Tyrant, Many-Striped Canastero, and Andean Tit-Spinetail. Later we stopped and saw some others species of birds like Andean Ruddy Duck, and Andean Coot, and our last stop was at the Papallacta Lake where Andean Gulls were searching the water for some food. We arrived at the lodge at 16:30 pm and dinner was at 19:00 pm.

Day 7

Friday 13th November

Weather: overcast and sunny.

We had coffee and tea at 3:45am and at 4:00am we took our packed breakfast and started our drive toward Cosanga, passing by Baeza, a nice Amazonian town where people get their profits by cattle ranching. Our main destination was Cabanas San Isidro, a very famous lodge in a beautiful cloud forest with a good number of birds, mammals, amphibians, insects especially butterflies, moths, and beetles, and it is also the only place where the San Isidro Owl can be seen - the lodge is a fascinating destination. On our way there we saw a Lyre-tailed Nightjar perched on a cliff. We got to the lodge at 5:40am finding a Rufous-bellied Nighthawk. San Isidro has electric posts and insects especially moths are attracted by the light so birds come every morning to eat. We stayed near the dining room for 2 hours where several birds came such as Black-billed Peppershrike, Subtropical Cacique, and Russet-backed Oropendola amongst others.

At 7:40am we watched while a member of the staff went to give worms to a White-bellied Antpitta, and Chestnut-crowned Antpitta. After this amazing beginning we went to have breakfast and watch the hummingbird feeders around 8:20am, and then walked along the gravel road and got back to the lodge to have lunch at 12:00 pm. We left at 13:00 pm and returned to Guango, stopping in a place called sardinas where there is a refinery, and there we found Red-breasted Blackbird, and Yellow-browed Sparrow. We arrived in Guango at 18:30pm, with dinner at 19:00pm.

Day 8

Saturday 14th November

Weather: Sunny all day. Trail Conditions: Easy to moderate.

Breakfast was at 5:30 am, and bird watching at 6:00 am along the pipe line trail with not much action in the first hour, but after that everything began to come out including Lacrimose Mountain-tanager, Black-crested Warbler, White-banded Tyrannulet, Gray-breasted Mountain Toucan, and Dusky Piha. After a couple of hours on this trail we went to another trail called the waterfall trail where we were looking for Chestnut-naped Antpitta but we did not find it, so we decided to go back to the lodge around 10:00 am and watch the hummingbirds. We had lunch at 11:30, drove back to Quito at 12:30 without stopping, and arrived at the international airport Mariscal Sucre at 15:15 pm to drop off Paul and Stephen who were returning home. We got to the Hotel Fuente De Piedra at 16:00 pm.

Day 9

Sunday 15th November

Weather: Sunny.

At 6:00 am we left the hotel to go to Antisana National Park with Vivian Waugh. After an hour crossing Los Chillos Valley we got to the national park with a wonderful landscape - we could see Cotopaxi volcano, Sincholagua volcano and the Antisana volcano. After 15 minutes we did our first stop to stretch our legs and started to find birds like Paramo Pipit, Ecuadorian Hillstar, Andean Condor, and Plain-coloured Seedeater. We drove a little more and the rare Black-faced Ibis was digging the field looking for food. Then we went to la mica cocha, a glacier lake, to watch Silvery Grebe, Yellow-billed Pintail and Andean Teal. After this excellent morning we went to have lunch in the hacienda at 12:00pm, and on the way back to Quito we did some stops and got to our hotel at 16:00 pm saying good bye to the clients and wishing them a safe journey home...

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Bird List (* either endemic or difficult to find)

1	Neotropic Cormorant.	91	Crimson Rumped Toucanet.	181	*White Capped Dipper.
2	Andean Teal.	92	*Pale -mandibled Arasari.	182	Brown Bellied Swallow.
3	Yellow Billed Pintail.	93	*Plate Billed Mountain Toucan.	183	Blue And White Swallow.
4	*Torrent Duck.	94	*Gray Breasted Mountain Toucan.	184	Southern Rough Winged Swallow.
5	*Andean Rudy Duck.	95	Crimson Mantled Woodpecker.	185	Barn Swallow.
6	Snowy Egret.	96	Golden Olive Woodpecker.	186	Rufous Wren.
7	Cattle Egret.	97	Smoky Brown Woodpecker.	187	Gras Wren.
8	Striated Heron.	98	Yellow Vented Woodpecker.	188	Whiskered Wren.
9	*Andean Condor.	99	Bar Bellied Woodpecker.	189	Southern House Wren.
10	Black Vulture.	100	Black Cheeked Woodpecker.	190	Tropical Parula.
11	Turkey Vulture.	101	Stout Billed Cinclodes.	191	Blackburnian Warbler.
12	Osprey.	102	Bar Winged Cinclodes.	192	Blackpoll Warbler.
13	*Gray Backed Hawk.	103	*Pacific Hornero.	193	*Olive Crowned Yellow Throat
14	Black-chested Buzzard Eagle.	104	*Andean Tit Spinetail.	194	Canada Warbler.
15	Roadside Hawk.	105	Azaras Spinetail.	195	Slate Throated Whitestart.
16	Broad Winged Hawk.	106	Rufous Spinetail.	196	Spectacled Whitestart.
17	Variable Hawk.	107	Red Faced Spinetail.	197	Three Striped Warbler.
18	*Black and Chestnut Eagle.	108	*Many Striped Canastero.	198	Black Crested Warbler.
19	Carunculated Caracara.	109	Pearled Treerunner.	199	Russet Crowned Warbler.
20	American Kestrel.	110	Spotted Barbtail.	200	Bananaquit.
21	Sickle winged Guan.	111	Scaly Throated Foliage Gleaner.	201	Golden Rumped Euphonia.
22	*Dark Backed Wood Quail.	112	Buff Fronted Foliage Gleaner.	202	Orange Bellied Euphonia.
23	Andean Coot.	113	Tyrannine Woodcreeper.	203	Thick Billed Euphonia.
24	Spotted Sandpiper.	114	Wedge Billed Woodcreeper.	204	Cinereous Conebill.
25	*Southern Lapwing.	115	Spotted Woodcreeper.	205	Blue Backed Conebill.
26	Andean Gull.	116	Olive Backed Woodcreeper.	206	Bluish Flowerpiercer.
27	Feral Pigeon.	117	Streak Headed Woodcreeper.	207	Masked Flowerpiercer.
28	Band Tailed Pigeon.	118	Montane Woodcreeper.	208	Glossy Flowerpiercer.
29	Rudy Pigeon.	119	*Uniform Antshrike.	209	Black Flowerpiercer.
30	Plumbeous Pigeon.	120	*White Backed Fire Eye.	210	Rusty Flowerpiercer.
31	Eared Dove.	121	*Immaculed Antbird.	211	White Sided Flowerpiercer.
32	White Tipped Dove.	122	*Giant Antpitta.	212	Fawn Breasted Tanager.
33	*Barred Parakeet.	123	* Moustached Antpitta.	213	Golden Tanager.
34	White Capped Parrot.	124	*Chestnut Crowned Antpitta.	214	Silver Throated Tanager.
35	Bronze Winged Parrot.	125	*White Bellied Antpitta.	215	Flame Faced Tanager.
36	Squirrel Cuckoo.	126	*Yellow Breasted Antpitta.	216	Metallic Green Tanager.
37	Smooth Billed Ani.	127	*Tawny Antpitta.	217	Blue Necked Tanager.
38	*Common Potoo.	128	Sooty Headed Tyrannulet.	218	Golden Naped Tanager.
39	*Rufous-bellied Nighthawk.	129	Tawny Rumped Tyrannulet.	219	Bay Headed Tanager.
40	*Lyre Tailed Nightjar.	130	Golden Faced Tyrannulet.	220	Beril Spangled Tanager.
41	White Collared swift.	131	Southern Beardless Tyrannulet.	221	*Scrub Tanager.

42	Gray Rumped Swift.	132	White Crested Elaenia.	222	Scarlet Bellied Mountain Tanager.
43	White Whiskered Hermit.	133	White Throated Tyrannulet.	223	Lacrimose Mountain Tanager.
44	Tawny Bellied Hermit.	134	White Tailed Tyrannulet.	224	Blue Winged Mountain Tanager.
45	White Necked Jacobin.	135	White Banded Tyrannulet.	225	Hooded Mountain Tanager.
46	*Brown Violetear.	136	Torrent Tyrannulet.	226	Black Chested Mountain Tanager.
47	Sparkling Violetear.	137	Tufted Tit Tyrant.	227	Swallow Tanager.
48	*Western Emerald.	138	Streak Necked Flycatcher.	228	Blue Gray Tanager.
49	Green Crowned Woodnymph.	139	Rufous Breasted Flycatcher.	229	Palm Tanager.
50	Andean Emerald.	140	Marble Faced Bristle Tyrant.	230	Lemon Rumped Tanager.
51	Rufous Tailed Hummingbird.	141	Rufous Crowned Tody Flycatcher.	231	Summer Tanager.
52	Speckled Hummingbird.	142	Cinnamon Flycatcher.	232	White Lined Tanager.
53	*Green Thorntail.	143	Ornate Flycatcher.	233	*Rufous Chested Tanager.
54	Fawn Breasted Brilliant.	144	western wood Pewee.	234	Common Bush Tanager.
55	Green Crowned Brilliant.	145	Smoke Colored Pewee.	235	Yellow Throated Bush Tanager.
56	*Ecuadorian Hillstar.	146	Acadian Flycatcher.	236	Black Capped Hemispingus.
57	*Giant Hummingbird.	147	Black Phoebe.	237	Superciliaried Hemispingus.
58	Shining Sunbeam.	148	Vermillion Flycatcher.	238	Black Winged Saltator.
59	Great Sapphirewing.	149	Rufous Breasted Chat Tyrant.	239	Southern Yellow Grosbeak.
60	*Bronzy Inca.	150	Slaty Backed Chat Tyrant.	240	Blue Black Grassquit.
61	Brown Inca.	151	Crowned Chat Tyrant.	241	Variable Seedeater.
62	Collared Inca.	152	*Smoky Bush Tyrant.	242	Yellow Bellied Seedeater.
63	Buff Winged Starfrontlet.	153	*White Tailed Shrike Tyrant.	243	Plain Colored Seedeater.
64	*Sword Billed Hummingbird.	154	Paramo Ground Tyrant.	244	Plumbeous Sierra Finch.
65	Buff Tailed Coronet.	155	Masked Water Tyrant.	245	Ash Breasted Sierra Finch.
66	Chestnut Breasted Coronet.	156	Dusky Capped Flycatcher.	246	Pale Naped Brush Finch.
67	*Velvet Purple Coronet.	157	Pale Edge Flycatcher.	247	Rufous Naped Brush Finch.
68	*Gorgeted Sunangel.	158	Social Flycatcher.	248	Tricolored Brush Finch.
69	*Tourmaline Sunangel.	159	Golden Crowned Flycatcher.	249	Slaty Brush Finch.
70	Sapphire Vented Puffleg.	160	Tropical Kingbird.	250	Chestnut Capped Brush Finch.
71	Golden Breasted Puffleg.	161	Barred Becard.	251	Stripe Headed Brush Finch.
72	*Booted Raked Tail.	162	Cinnamon Becard.	252	Orange Billed Sparrow.
73	Black Tailed Trainbearer.	163	White Winged Becard.	253	Black Striped Sparrow.
74	Viridian Metaltail.	164	Black And White Becard.	254	Yellow Browed Sparrow.
75	Tyrian Metaltail.	165	One Colored Becard.	255	Rufous Collared Sparrow.
76	Long Tailed Sylph.	166	Masked Tityra.	256	Shiny Cowbird.
77	Violet Tailed Sylph.	167	Red Crested Cotinga.	257	Russet Backed Oropendola.
78	Purple Throated Woodstar.	168	*Dusky Piha.	258	Scarlet Rumped Cacique.
79	White Bellied woostar.	169	*Andean Cock of the rock.	259	Subtropical Cacique.
80	Gorgeted Woodstar	170	*Golden Winged Manakin.	260	Northern Mountain Cacique.
81	*Crested Quetzal.	171	Turquoise Jay.	261	Red Breasted Blackbird.
82	Golden Headed Quetzal.	172	Inca Jay.	262	Hooded Siskin.
83	Masked Trogon.	173	Black Billed Peppershrike.	263	Olivaceous Siskin.
84	Ringed Kingfisher.	174	Red Eyed Vireo.	264	Amazon Kingfisher.

85	Broad Billed Motmot.	175	Brown Capped Vireo.	265	Lesser Elaenia.
86	Rufous Motmot.	176	Swanson's Thrush.	266	* Ecuadorian Ground Dove.
87	Highland Motmot.	177	Great Thrush.	267	*Band Backed Wren.
88	Barred Puffbird.	178	Glossy Black Thrush.	268	*Tennessee Warbler.
89	Red Headed Barbed.	179	Black Billed Thrush.	269	*Chestnut Bellied Thrush.
90	*Toucan Barbet.	180	*Ecuadorian Thrush.		