



AMAZING ECUADOR: BIRDING THE RICH & VARIED HABITATS OF SOUTHERN ECUADOR

With hummingbirds literally by the score and flocks of tanagers streaming through the canopy, we will be immersed in avian wonders! This itinerary focuses on the southern part of the country and we'll concentrate our time in ecological reserves owned by the Jocotoco Foundation, one of Ecuador's premier conservation organizations. Over 50 endangered bird species and over 100 regional endemic species can be found on the 12 Jocotoco reserves. Some, like El Oro Parakeet, are found nowhere else on earth.



The habitats we'll be exploring range from mangroves and marshes to tropical dry forest and high-elevation cloud forest. Many of the reserves we'll visit are protecting critically important remnants of once much more common habitats in the country. Many of the Andean bird species found in the northern part of the county extend their range into southern Ecuador, but there are also many species – the Tumbesian endemics – that are only found in the southern part of the country. We'll see a great mix of both!

Dates: Sunday, March 24th – Saturday, April 6th 2019 (14 days)

Cost: \$4,750 per person. \$325 single supplement. Children at least 14 years of age are welcome, if accompanied by an adult. \$500 deposit due upon registration.

What's included:

- All lodging and meals, expect meals in Guayaquil and at airports.
- Two expert naturalist guides, including a local guide intimately familiar with the region.
- Any entrance fees and park admissions.
- Transportation in a small, comfortable bus, including transfer to and from the airport.
- Pre-departure orientation session at North Branch Nature Center before the trip.

What is not included: Airfare, tips, some meals and incidentals are not included.

Accommodations and physical requirements:

All of the lodges where we'll be staying are situated in ecological reserves that are owned by the Jocotoco Foundation. Much of the birding on this trip will be along roadsides or easily walked trails, but do expect some mud and soggy conditions, but nothing extreme. There will not be any very high altitude visits, but the tour does spend some time at mid-elevations at around 2,300 meters, which might require some folks to walk more slowly on hillier slopes. The vast majority of the tour will be spent at relatively lower elevations, between sea level up to about 1,000 meters. If sunny, heat will be a factor in most areas, but most birding is planned during the morning and late afternoon hours, when it is cooler, and the birds are most active. Mosquitoes can be an issue around Jorupe and Buenaventura, but liberal use of repellent should keep them at bay. Participants should be prepared for early starts (breakfast before dawn) on most days!

For more information and registration, contact: Chip@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org



AMAZING ECUADOR

March 24 – April 6, 2019

Day 1: International arrival to Guayaquil. Night at the comfortable Grand Hotel Guayaquil.

Day 2: After rising early we will head straight to Manglares-Churute Ecological Reserve, about an hour SSE out of Guayaquil. Here the birding ranges from vast marsh habitats full of waterfowl and western Ecuador's only population of Horned Screamer to semi-deciduous woodlands with an interesting set of birds, many typical of the Tumbesian zone of SW Ecuador and NW Peru. The list of possibilities is a long one, but we only have a morning here. We will be on the lookout for Ecuadorian Ground-Dove, Amazilia Hummingbird, Ecuadorian Piculet, Collared Antshrike, White-tailed Jay, Speckle-breasted Wren, and Black-capped Sparrow.

In the afternoon we will undertake the drive to the now legendary Buenaventura Reserve - about three or four hours of travel – with some short birding stops along the way, time allowing. Late afternoon/evening arrival to Umbrellabird Lodge where we will spend the next three nights.

Day 3: All day birding at Buenaventura, where the forest trails and forested roadside habitats drip with birds; certainly one of the birdiest spots in the country. This is the home of the endemic El Oro Parakeet, a bird only discovered back in the 80's. During our visit they should be nesting, so we stand an excellent chance of seeing them at one of their nest boxes.

Aside from being a great place for some rare and local bird species – Long-wattled Umbrellabird and Club-winged Manakin leks! - Buenaventura offers up a fantastic cross section of neotropical bird groups, such as toucans, antbirds, and tanagers. The feeding stations right at the lodge are captivating, with clouds of hummers, Rufous-headed Chachalacas, and even the occasional, curious coati! Night Umbrellabird Lodge.

Day 4: Another full day of birding paradise at Buenaventura! Night Umbrellabird Lodge.

Day 5: Bird/drive to Macara. This is one of our longer travel days, but there can be some interesting birding along the way, especially further south once we get back into some prime Tumbesian habitats, where we might see our first Black-and-White Tanager or White-winged Brush-Finch. Night Jorupe (Urraca Lodge).

Day 6: All day birding at Jorupe reserve where we will likely see many Tumbesian bird specialties, like Blackish-headed Spinetail, Rufous-necked Foliage-gleaner, and Slaty Becard. The lodge itself is beautifully designed, and is surrounded by very birdy, native habitat, so we will really want to take full advantage of our time here. Night Jorupe (Urraca Lodge).

Day 7: Today we will probably want to leave early from Jorupe for a morning trip out west to the Peruvian border town of Zapotillo. Here the forest dries out a bit and is obviously lower in stature, being more similar to the Tumbesian zone of northern Peru. A trip out to this zone can be worth it as it is often the best shot at seeing Gray-capped Cuckoo and Black-and-white Tanager, two migratory species that can be unpredictable and hard to track down. This is also the only known spot in Ecuador for the Tumbes Tyrant, so we will make a special effort for this as well.

Other birds to be on the lookout for in particular are Tumbes Hummingbird, Chestnut-collared Swallow, Tumbes Sparrow, Saffron Siskin, and Comb Duck in the nearby swampy areas. We plan to be back to the lodge in time for a sit-down lunch, and then a short break before some more afternoon birding around Jorupe. Note that if the conditions are particularly rainy, road conditions can be affected, so we could stay closer to Jorupe. Night Jorupe (Urraca Lodge).

Day 8: Drive to Tapichalaca, birding on the way in the Sozoranga area, Utuana reserve, and Catamayo Valley, where we will have a better chance at seeing some of the montane, Tumbesian species, such as Chapman's Antshrike, Gray-headed Antbird, Black-cowled Saltator, Bay-crowned Brush-Finch, Tumbes Sparrow, and many more. Temperatures should be cooler today once we leave the Macara area, barring intense sun. Night Tapichalaca.

Day 9: Morning visit to the now famous Jocotoco Antpitta feeder, where we should see the antpittas at our feet! The rest of the day will be spent birding at and around the beautiful Tapichalaca reserve, either along trails or birdy roadsides. Night Tapichalaca.

Day 10: Bird/drive to Zamora. Depending on the weather and our earlier success with the birds here at Tapichalaca, we can decide whether to do some early morning birding around the lodge, or just head back north, setting our sights on Copalinga. Once we finally do get through Loja, and drop over to the east slope, an afternoon birding drive down the old Loja-Zamora road can be very productive, especially for colorful tanagers (like Vermilion and Blue-browed), and active mixed species flocks.

The drive is scenic and follows the rushing Zamora River, which can be a great place for Torrent Duck, White-capped Dipper, and even Fasciated Tiger-Heron at the lower end. Night Copalinga.

Day 11: All day birding at Copalinga and the Bombuscaro sector of the Podocarpus National Park. Copalinga and Bombuscaro are nestled in a breath-taking valley, with the roaring Bombuscaro River down below. Only at about 900-1000m above sea level, the slopes are blanketed by lush, upper tropical forest, and of course, loaded with a new (and very large!) set of bird species. We will only have time to scratch the surface, but weather permitting, some great birds should be seen. Coppery-tailed Jacamar, Black-streaked Puffbird, Amazonian

Umbrellabird, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, and Paradise Tanager are all regulars of the area. Bombuscaro also happens to be the place where the Foothill Elaenia was first sound-recorded and determined to be a new species to science, and we have a strong chance of seeing it providing we hit the right flock.

Copalinga is a very comfortable and attractive lodge also run by the Jocotoco Foundation, but originally built by two Belgian ex-pats. We'll certainly enjoy some of the best food of the trip here on this Ecuadorian lodge circuit! The Vervain flowers around the dining room attract one of the best assemblages of east-slope hummers anywhere, including Wire-crested Thorntail, Spangled Coquette, and Golden-headed Sapphire, while the feeders always buzz with Violet-fronted Brilliants and Fork-tailed Woodnymphs. Night Copalinga.

Day 12: Another day birding Copalinga and surroundings. Night Copalinga.

Day 13: Morning at Copalinga, afternoon bird/drive to Loja and flight to Guayaquil. Night Grandhotel Guayaquil.

Day 14: International departure

About the trip leader:

Chip Darmstadt is the executive director of the North Branch Nature Center and an avid neotropical birder and naturalist. His first experience in the tropics was working as a field assistant studying birds in Venezuela and Costa Rica. After catching the tropical birding bug, he has returned to the tropics many times to marvel at the incredible diversity of Central and South America. Chip has guided trips to Ecuador, Costa Rica and around the US. We will also have an in-country guide for the entire trip.



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