

ITINERARY

**SOUTHWESTERN ECUADOR SPECIALTIES:
Jocotoco Foundation Reserves**

February 22 – March 6, 2025



The Jocotoco Foundation has set up some wonderful reserves in Ecuador that shelter a number of highly endangered and range-restricted birds such as the El Oro Parakeets seen here. Photograph by participant John Rounds.

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable sightings
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and noting the birds we see
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

This tour visits the marvelous dry deciduous and humid evergreen forests that comprise a large yet endangered area of southwestern Ecuador. This region contributes a number of unique species to the country's great avian diversity, as it is the northern extension of the Tumbesian endemic center, a critical area for many bird species that can only be found here and in adjacent northwestern Peru. The habitats we will be birding range from high misty Andean forested ridges and dry desert-like intermontane valleys to humid, west-slope foothills and the deciduous *Bombax* forests and semi-deserts of the central Pacific coast. Several Ecuadorian endemics, including the El Oro Parakeet and the Jocotoco Antpitta occur along our route, and we will prioritize finding these specialties.

Our tour is designed to maximize our chances for southwestern specialties that complement the avifauna seen on our *Jewels of Ecuador* tour and minimize overlap. We begin in Guayaquil, bird south of the city, and then do a large loop to the south and east, birding the Buenaventura Reserve near Pinas (three nights, Umbrellabird Lodge), the newest of the foundation's lodges at Jorupe Reserve near Macara (four nights, Urraca Lodge), and the Tapichalaca Reserve (three nights, Casa Simpson Lodge), home of the Jocotoco Antpitta. We conclude our trip with lunch at Tapichalaca before catching an evening flight to Quito in order to connect with our international flights home the following day.

As Frank Chapman realized as early as the 1920s, southwestern Ecuador is one of the most complex regions in South America with regard to its biogeography and its avifauna; it is a showcase of diversity and endemism. The dry forests of the southwest (Tumbesian Center of Endemism) support a very high proportion of unique forms (more than forty taxa) and comprise one of the most threatened habitats in South America. We will be in the range of almost half of Ecuador's forty Threatened Birds (Birdlife International/ICBP classification). Our birding will take us to wonderfully biodiverse areas critically in need of protection, as well as to such established preserves as the Jocotoco Foundation reserves at Buenaventura, Jorupe, Utuana, and Tapichalaca. In addition to the numerous species typical of each of the habitats on our route, with the help of some keen, sharp-eyed participants we can hope to see half to two-thirds of these rarities.



*The Jocotoco Antpitta is another bird that benefits from the reserves created by the Jocotoco Foundation.
Photograph by guide Mitch Lysinger.*

The highlights of this birding fortnight are the birds themselves, a remarkable grouping of beautiful, behaviorally fascinating, endangered, and little-known species. They range from a distinctive Ecuadorian endemic parakeet of the genus *Pyrrhura*, the El Oro Parakeet (described in 1986 from the province for which it was named; and still known only from El Oro and adjacent Canar) to more than thirty species of hummingbirds, including such fantastic species as White-tipped Sicklebill, Rainbow Starfrontlet, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Collared Inca, Violet-tailed and Long-tailed sylphs, Little (Flame-throated) and Purple-throated sunangels, Glowing Puffleg, Crowned Woodnymph, Green Thorntail, and Rufous-capped Thornbill. Expect good looks at most of the long list of Tumbesian specialties (including the secretive Watkins' Antpitta and Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner) and to witness at close range such knock-outs as displaying Club-winged Manakins and singing Red-hooded Tanagers. Past tour groups have had good looks at such wonderful species as Pale-browed Tinamou, Horned Screamer, Gray-backed Hawk, Golden-plumed, White-necked, Red-masked, and Gray-cheeked parakeets, Pacific Parrotlet, Gray-capped Cuckoo, Peruvian Screech-Owl, Andean Pygmy-Owl, Peruvian Pygmy-Owl (often voted most valuable bird for its assistance in attracting many others), Ecuadorian Trogon, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Choco and Yellow-throated (Chestnut-mandibled) toucans, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Ecuadorian Piculet, Scarlet-backed, Crimson-mantled, Powerful, and Guayaquil woodpeckers, Pacific Tuftedcheek, Collared and Chapman's antshrikes, Gray-headed Antbird; Chestnut-naped, Equatorial, Plain-backed, and Ochre-breasted antpittas, Elegant Crescentchest, Ecuadorian, Chusquea, and Ocellated tapaculos, displaying Pacific Elaenias, Black-crested Tit-Tyrant (a favorite of many participants), Agile Tit-Tyrant, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Orange-

banded and Gray-breasted flycatchers, Jelski's Chat-Tyrant, Ochraceous Attila, Snowy-throated Kingbird, One-colored and Slaty becards, Long-wattled Umbrellabirds, Chestnut-collared Swallow, Speckle-breasted and Superciliated wrens, Maranon, Ecuadorian, and Plumbeous-backed thrushes, the spectacular White-tailed Jay, Gray-and-gold Warbler, Crimson-breasted Finch, Black-capped Sparrow, Black-cowled Saltator, White-edged Oriole, Bay-crowned, White-winged, White-headed, and Pale-naped brush-finches; and around thirty species of tanagers and their relatives including Black-eared Hemispingus (of the race *piurae*), as well as Red-hooded and Golden-crowned tanagers.

The Jocotoco Foundation has been hard at work during the past few years erecting some comfortable lodges right on their reserves, and we plan to stay at three of them. One of the highlights of the tour will be staying in their lovely lodge right at the reserve for the Jocotoco Antpitta, and with luck we should see at least one of the group of Jocotoco Antpittas that have been “trained” to come to the trail for earthworms! This Ecuadorian specialty, recently found in adjacent Peru as well, was described new to science in 1999. (But remember that antpittas have a mind of their own, and if the ground has been wet—and hence good for earthworms to be active—they may have less incentive to come “on call.” But they have been quite reliable in recent years, and we have allowed enough time at Tapichalaca for two tries if need be.) We will also stay at the Jocotoco Foundation's two newest lodges: first at the Buenaventura Reserve's Umbrellabird Lodge (near Pinas), in the lush foothills of the west where we will be very near prime habitat for the El Oro Parakeet and the Long-wattled Umbrellabird; and then at the beautifully designed Jorupe Reserve's Urraca Lodge (near Macara), where we will bird right in the heart of some of the most well preserved *Bombax*-dominated, deciduous forest accessible in Ecuador! The Southwest has much to offer!

*This tour may be combined with **SE ECUADOR: ORANGE-THROATED TANAGER & FOOTHILL SPECIALTIES, February 13 - 22, 2025.***

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** This tour involves a great deal of hiking. You should be able to hike two to three miles in a day. We will often be walking on trails which may be muddy and have hills/ steep sections. If you use a walking stick, be sure to bring it! We could be out in the field for half a day or more at times, meaning you will need to carry water and snacks with you. We will also spend time standing and waiting for birds to come in, so be prepared to be on your feet quite a bit.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** This tour prioritizes specialties; be prepared for serious or “hard-core” birding, although we will take time to look at widespread species as well. Roads may be rough and dusty, depending on recent weather. There will be long drives on several days. You will need to be able to get in and out of our bus several times a day; the step is about 12 inches high.
- **PACE:** We will generally start before dawn, and will be out until early evening, about 6-7 p.m. We may take lunches in the field some days. Some evenings we will have optional night-birding sessions after dinner.
- **ELEVATION:** We will reach altitudes of about 10,000 feet on this tour, and we will spend time birding at about 9000 feet at Podocarpus N.P. Our tour will take us from sea-level up to the higher elevations. We sleep at elevations between 4500 and 8500 feet.
- **WEATHER:** We'll be birding in habitats ranging from wet montane forest to semi-desert. Temperatures will range from 40's to mid-90's F, depending on altitude and weather. Expect to encounter rain, and possibly cold, blustery conditions. It may be hot and potentially humid in some of the lower areas.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** There are no indoor restrooms on most of our excursions, so participants must be prepared to make comfort stops in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

About the Birding Areas



Tumbesian semi-desert and deciduous forests of the Southwest—Well to the west of Guayaquil lies a barren coastal desert—the northernmost finger of the great Atacama. To the east (and inland) the drying effects of the Humboldt Current are moderated by the influence of the great estuaries near Guayaquil and by outlying hills uplifted enough to trap moisture from the low-lying clouds. Here acacias and cacti scattered across coastal desert sands give way inland to dense semi-desert thornbush. The canyons that drain the hills near Guayaquil support sizable stands of bromeliad-festooned deciduous forest that penetrates well out into the desert scrub. Huge *Bombax*, related to the wonderful baobab trees of Africa, dominate the woodlands of the Chongon Hills and other outlying hills.

Similar habitat is found to the southeast in arid intermontane valleys, inland from the first chain of Andean foothills that rise high enough to trap the Pacific moisture. In this region of transition occur many species of birds that are restricted to the arid coasts and semi-arid foothills of southwestern Ecuador and adjacent northwestern Peru. Named for the northwesternmost department of Peru (Tumbes), this region is known as the Tumbesian Endemic Center, and its dry and transitional habitats are among the

most distinctive, and most threatened, on the continent. At least fifty species are endemic to this region, an area of less than 50,000 square kilometers; almost two-thirds of these are possible on the tour. A partial list of the specialties of the more arid and semi-arid habitats includes: Pale-browed Tinamou, Gray-backed Hawk, Red-masked and Gray-cheeked parakeets, Pacific Parrotlet, Ecuadorian Ground-Dove, Ochre-bellied Dove, Peruvian Screech-Owl, Scrub Nightjar, Short-tailed Swift (of the Tumbesian race *ocypetes*), Long-billed Hermit (of the Tumbesian race *baroni*), two distinctive races of *Amazilia* Hummingbird (the northern race in the lowlands, and the 'Loja' Hummingbird, now considered an inland, highland race of *Amazilia* but split in vol. 5 of *Handbook of Birds of the World*), Tumbes Hummingbird, Short-tailed Woodstar, Ecuadorian Trogon, Whooping Motmot (as one of five splits of the Blue-crowned Motmot group), Ecuadorian Piculet, Scarlet-backed and Guayaquil woodpeckers, Pacific (split from Pale-legged Hornero), Blackish-headed and Necklaced spinetails, Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner, Collared Antshrike, Watkins's Antpitta, Elegant Crescentchest, Snowy-throated Kingbird, Baird's and Sooty-crowned flycatchers, Pacific Elaenia, Tumbes and Marañon Tyrannulet (two split from Mouse-colored Tyrannulet), Gray-and-white Tyrannulet, Gray-breasted Flycatcher, Slaty and One-colored becards, White-tailed Jay, Plumbeous-backed and Ecuadorian thrushes, Superciliated and Speckle-breasted wrens, Saffron Siskin, Gray-and-gold Warbler, Black-lored Yellowthroat, Tumbes and Black-capped sparrows, Crimson-breasted Finch, White-headed Brush-Finch, White-edged Oriole, and the disjunct (and weird-sounding) Tumbesian race *flavicrissus* of Yellow-rumped Cacique. Additional species of interest include numerous raptors, Red-billed Scythebill, Fasciated Wren, and such rarities as Rufous-headed Chachalaca.

It is this group of Tumbesian specialties—some common and others scarce or difficult to see—that constitute the focus of our search near Guayaquil, near Macara, at Jorupe Reserve, and in other arid parts of Loja province.

Marshes of the coastal plain—South of Guayaquil, all the way to Machala, much of the coastal plain has been appropriated for banana plantations, rice, cacao, or grazing. But there are some good remnants of what used to be a vast coastal marshland. These wetlands support the largest population of Horned Screamers in Ecuador, as well as a few Pinnated Bitterns and other waders. We'll make stops to bird these remnant marshes near Manglares-Churute Reserve south of Guayaquil and inland from Machala near Santa Rosa. Additional species of interest in such areas include Cocoli Heron, Limpkin, Snail Kite, Savanna Hawk, White-throated Crake, and the Tumbesian race *atripennis* of Masked Water-Tyrant.



The spectacular male Long-wattled Umbrellabird is a must-see! We'll find these distinctive cotingas in the foothills near Buenaventura. Photo by participant Brian Armstrong.

Humid foothill forest west of Pinas (Buenaventura Reserve)—The montane rainforest that once cloaked the west-facing slopes of Ecuador's western Andes is now largely fragmented, especially near roads giving access. That forest remaining in the southwestern foothills of the provinces of Canar and El Oro is of particular interest—aside from the sheer aesthetics of its bird life—for four reasons: 1) it constitutes the southern range limit for a number of upper-tropical species restricted to the humid west slope of Colombia and Ecuador; 2) the degree to which it is geographically isolated from the more continuous chain of Andean foothill forest to the north has allowed the evolution of some genetically isolated populations, some of which are distinct enough to be considered full species, e.g., the El Oro Parakeet, *Pyrrhura orcesi*, discovered as recently as 1980; 3) the occurrence here at 2500 feet of species generally considered subtropical, i.e., of elevations 5000-8500 feet, (e.g., Andean Solitaire and Gray-breasted Wood-Wren) exemplifies a fascinating expansion of ecological niches; and 4) the unusual mixture of species of diverse geographic origins occurring together here reflects a complex and fascinating biogeographic history still being slowly unraveled. More simply said, these west-slope foothills present an extremely birdy area that invites almost constant questions about the evolutionary process.

This same exciting mix is enough to make an excited birder forget about everything else: Rarely—in decent weather—is there a dull moment when there isn't something to look at and ogle! Combine the strong showing of species restricted to the Choco endemic center with a few Tumbesian birds that barely creep into these more humid forests, and add a few very local endemics known only from this area, and you have a unique and exciting mix. Fortunately, the Jocotoco Foundation now has under its control a large tract of this forest type, known as the Buenaventura Reserve, and we will be right in the middle of it for the better part of three days.

Among the many possible species in this zone are: Barred and Gray-backed hawks, Bronze-winged Parrot, Red-masked Parakeet, the endemic El Oro Parakeet, White-whiskered Hermit, White-tipped Sicklebill, Brown Inca, Violet-tailed Sylph, Crowned Woodnymph (of the SW Ecuador/N Peru race *hypochlora*, considered by some to represent a full species called "Emerald-bellied Woodnymph"), the race *intermedia* of White-vented Plumeteer (a taxonomic puzzle that may best prove to be a distinct species limited to Southwest Ecuador), White-throated Daggerbill (split from Wedge-billed Hummingbird), Green-crowned Brilliant, Green Thorntail, Andean Emerald, Golden-headed Quetzal, Rufous and Broad-billed motmots, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Collared ("Pale-mandibled") Aracari, Choco and Yellow-throated toucans, Line-cheeked Spinetail, Pacific Tuftedcheek, Western Woodhaunter, Uniform Treehunter, Brown-billed Scythebill, Russet and Uniform antshrikes, Esmeraldas and Zeledon's antbirds, Ochre-breasted Antpitta, Ecuadorian Tapaculo (a rare, recently described species that is very hard to find), Peruvian tyrannulet, split from Golden faced, Ochraceous Attila, Scaled Fruiteater, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Club-winged and Golden-winged manakins, Whiskered and Bay wrens, Three-banded Warbler, numerous tanagers (including Rufous-throated), and Black-winged Saltator.

We'll bird the Buenaventura Reserve and surrounding humid west-slope foothills for two full days; the reserve alone protects some of these species.



The spritely Black-crested Tit-Tyrant is a small flycatcher of the mountains of southern Ecuador and northern Peru.
 Photograph by guide Willy Perez.

Tumbesian humid montane forest—Toward the crest of the western Andes, which is surprisingly low in the Southwest, enough moisture accumulates, at least locally, to support a subtropical-elevation humid forest. This is perhaps the most endangered of all the Tumbesian habitats. Here the forest is mossy, stunted and wet, offering quite a contrast to the semi-desert scrub and deciduous forests nearby. The weather of this zone is characteristically unpredictable, varying from sunny and windy to calm and totally fogged in. Should we be lucky enough to encounter conditions somewhere in between, we could add several montane Tumbesian specialties: Rufous-necked Foliage-gleaner, Chapman's Antshrike, Gray-headed Antbird (a rare bamboo specialist), Black-crested Tit-Tyrant, Jelski's Chat-Tyrant, the very distinctive *piurae* race of Black-eared Hemispingus (elevated to full-species status by Ridgely et al.), the disjunct northwestern *viridicollis* race of Silver-backed Tanager, Bay-crowned Brush-Finch, and Black-cowled Saltator. Other intriguing species in these montane habitats include: Rainbow Starfrontlet, Purple-throated Sunangel, Undulated, Scaled, and Chestnut-crowned antpittas, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, the Andean race *nigriceps* of Slaty Thrush (breeding in southwestern Ecuador, contra older literature), and White-winged, Yellow-breasted (Rufous-naped), and Gray-browed brush-finches.

We'll sample this Tumbesian humid montane forest zone near Sozoranga and Utuana, in southwestern Loja province, from our base at Urraca Lodge.

Humid montane forest on the east slope of the Andes and near its crest—Settlements in the Ecuadorian Andes have traditionally been concentrated in the relatively dry intermontane valleys west of the crest of the eastern cordillera...for good reason. The outer (east) slope of the eastern Andean chain, especially near the equator, captures so much moisture from Amazonia that traditional food crops would be waterlogged. Soils are relatively thin and prone to erosion from the prolific rains. Yet the humid east slope supports some of the most magnificent forest in the world. And the very factors that have deterred settlement of the upper east slope have contributed to the persistence to this day of some seemingly boundless stretches of gloriously beautiful temperate and subtropical evergreen forest. Extensive stands of native bamboos and a wondrous array of terrestrial and epiphytic orchids, bromeliads, and other flowering plants enrich the cloaking forest and enhance its biodiversity. At certain, often-wind-swept low passes in southern Ecuador, this lush montane forest spills over to the western slope of the eastern cordillera.

The pass near Quebrada Honda is one such place. The misty Andean ridges that line the western edge of Podocarpus National Park have a mysterious air about them and have become known among birders as among the premier sites to find some of the rarest and most poorly known Andean birds, among them Golden-plumed Parakeet, Masked Saltator, and now the newly discovered Jocotoco Antpitta. Gnarled trees of seemingly more temperate-forest affinity dominate the landscape here, which is unusual for an elevation of around 7000-8000 feet. One does not need to wonder for long why this is so, as persistent winds, rain, and cold temperatures punish the slopes on an almost daily

basis. Elevation plays a major part in species partitioning, and it is not surprising either that from this unusual mix of conditions and altitudes, in a relatively isolated cluster of ridges, arose something completely different and somehow specifically adapted to only this tiny area: *Grallaria ridgelyi*, the Jocotoco Antpitta, discovered at the roadside here just east of the pass in late 1997 and officially described in the October 1999 issue of *The Auk*. So distinctive is it that scientists had even considered naming an entirely new genus for it. As it is a remarkably tricky species to see (unless it happens to be responding to earthworms offered it along the trail), we will be devoting at least one morning, and possibly two, to finding it. Our recent tours have enjoyed the hard-won success of local guide Franco (or others [Diego] who have now been handed the torch) in training and maintaining the attention of several Jocotoco Antpittas to come in to a feeding station along the “Antpitta Trail,” and we’ll hope the happy development continues. In the process we are sure to see many other fascinating birds.



The colorful Barred Fruiteater is found in the higher elevations of the Andes. We'll watch for these interesting cotingas in Podocarpus National Park. Photograph by participant Becky Hansen.

Very little birding had been done in this area until recently, and some interesting finds have resulted, including Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner and Chestnut-crested Cotinga. We will certainly need some luck to encounter either of these, but there is a long list of interesting Andean possibilities, some of which are more regularly seen, some of them right at the feeders or just outside our lodge: Bearded Guan, White-throated Screech-Owl, Swallow-tailed Nightjar, Rufous-capped Thornbill, Collared Inca, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Little and Amethyst-throated sunangels, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Powerful Woodpecker, Equatorial and Chestnut-naped antpittas, Chusquea and Ash-colored tapaculos, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-capped Tyrannulet, Orange-banded Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Barred and Green-and-black fruiteaters, Pale-footed Swallow, Rufous and Plain-tailed wrens, Black-crested and Russet-crowned warblers, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager, Black-capped and Black-headed hemispinguses, Red-hooded, Golden-crowned, and Grass-green tanagers, Hooded Mountain-Tanager, White-capped Tanager, Plushcap, and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. In addition to the antpitta feeding program, exciting new management programs include a nest-box program for Golden-plumed Parakeets in upper Quebrada Honda. There is also a feeding station for White-throated Quail-Doves along the Antpitta Trail. Based at Tapichalaca for 3 nights, we'll hope to have time to bird down the east slope at some point. Additional species of note that we could see at lower elevations here include Mottle-backed Elaenia, Maranon Thrush, and Black-faced Tanager.

From Loja to Tapichalaca, we'll sample further the montane east-slope avifauna where it spills over to the west slope of the eastern cordillera. On the side Podocarpus National Park, offers further possibilities for Bearded Guan, Glowing Puffleg, a host of montane tanagers, and many of the species listed above.



*The Rufous-headed Chachalaca has a limited distribution in southwestern Ecuador and northern Peru.
Photograph by participant Becky Hansen.*

Itinerary for Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves

Day 1, Sat, 22 Feb. Arrival in Guayaquil. It is possible to arrange flights from Miami, usually arriving between 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.; our office staff can help find the schedule best for you. Once you have passed through baggage claim and cleared customs, watch for a Grand Hotel Guayaquil sign with your name on it near the exit to the outside; our representative will meet you for transfer to our modern hotel, some fifteen minutes away in downtown Guayaquil. Be sure to ask at the desk for a note from your guide detailing plans for tomorrow.

We encourage you to come a day early to rest up before the tour starts—with a 6.00 a.m. breakfast tomorrow morning, you will have a short night if you get in at midnight or later. The Grand Hotel Guayaquil offers air-conditioning, a swimming pool, a 24-hour restaurant, and a nearby tree-filled plaza with large iguanas and a few native birds. It's only a few blocks to the Malecon, a fenced parkway along the estuary, where Yellow-crowned Night-Herons nest in the big banyan trees. If you would like to do some shopping in Ecuador (there will be virtually no opportunity during the tour), we recommend coming a day early; there are excellent shops in Guayaquil, and we can help you make arrangements for an English-speaking guide if you like. You should, however, be very cautious about walking around alone in Guayaquil. Night at the Grand Hotel Guayaquil.

Day 2, Sun, 23 Feb. Guayaquil to Buenaventura. Today we are traveling, but it's a very birdy day. We'll head south this morning along the coastal plain toward Machala. About 45 kms south of Guayaquil the highway passes right through the Manglares-Churute Reserve, an effort to protect freshwater marshes and mangroves of the Guayas River delta as well as dry tropical woodlands of the nearby Churute Hills. The freshwater marshes here support the largest breeding population of Horned Screamers in Ecuador—and the only population in western Ecuador. We plan to stop here to check for screamers and other inhabitants, from Pinnated Bittern to Masked Water-Tyrant, Ecuadorian ground Dove and many other birds. Depending on water levels, many waders and a lot of water birds can be around.

Most of the habitat of the coastal plain has long since been converted to agriculture. Rice fields and flooded marshes give way to vast plantations of bananas and other tropical fruits. We will push to get through this altered habitat, stopping again in the Santa Rosa marshes, where we've turned away from the coast toward the distant Andean foothills. Here, flooded fields and shrimp ponds provide habitat for waterbirds and waders, as well as such marsh lovers. If conditions look good, we plan to bird the levees for a break on our way to our destination, the Jocotoco Foundation reserve at Buenaventura. We'll start birding the Buenaventura Reserve this afternoon en route to Umbrellabird Lodge, our base for three nights. We should arrive in time to enjoy the many hummers and other species attracted to the feeders right at the

lodge. Watch (and listen!) for Rufous-headed Chachalacas even as you get into your room. Night at Umbrellabird Lodge, Buenaventura.

Days 3-4, Mon-Tue, 24-25 Feb. Buenaventura Reserve. Rising out of the flat and drier lowlands, not far from the coast, is a remnant finger of very humid forest at about 2500 feet that we have long referred to as Pinas (for the nearest town). These forests are near the southernmost extension of the western humid (Choco) forests, whose northern boundary reaches eastern Panama. We have two full days and a morning to bird the area. The weather will inform exactly how we spend our time. If it's not fogged in or raining, we'll probably want to start early one morning to look for the flagship Long-wattled Umbrellabirds. We may then get a ride up to the upper section of good forest and bird our way down on foot, along the old cobblestone road that winds down through the reserve. This passes through some wonderful patches of forest that are usually teeming with birds. The road itself can be muddy in places, showing little trace of the old cobblestones, and we'll want to bird along one trail that is sure to be deeply muddy. We strongly recommend rubber boots, rain gear, and plenty of water for this excursion.

The Buenaventura Reserve is the only protected area for the globally threatened El Oro Parakeet, now numbering around 220 individuals—an increase from around 160 in 2001. Researchers have placed some nest boxes for the parakeets as part of a recovery plan, and some are now being used. We'll hope to be lucky enough to observe the beneficiaries of these nest boxes, but we can't count on it. The mornings here are often bright and clear—and good for watching for El Oro Parakeets and other potentially distant perched or flying parrots and raptors. But come early afternoon, don't be surprised if the rising moisture from the nearby lowlands closes in, condenses, and creates a thick fog, making visibility almost impossible. On a good day, we may get lucky and avoid the fog, but we will do our best to get as much birding in before this (often) daily phenomenon occurs. We will also have opportunities to stake out the hummingbird feeders and banana feeders maintained by the Jocotoco Foundation at the lodge and at a nearby site further up the main road. Nights at Umbrellabird Lodge, Buenaventura.



*This Pale-browed Tinamou was seen at Jorupe on our 2023 tour.
Photograph by participant Becky Hansen.*

Day 5, Wed, 26 Feb. Buenaventura to Jorupe. After an early breakfast we will leave Buenaventura area, we'll set our sights southward and embark on one of our longest drives. We plan select stops for Tumbesian species in the lovely semi-arid hills, woodlands, and cactus deserts en route to Jorupe Lodge, near the small town of Macara on the Peruvian border. The deciduous woodland along our route supports White-headed Brush-Finch, Saffron Siskin, and Tumbes Hummingbird. All of our birding will be roadside birding, and, fortunately, much of the road has been paved in the last few years. But there are still some bad stretches, so be prepared for a long travel day. We'll try to get in at a reasonable hour; we'll have four nights based at the elegantly designed Urraca Lodge. Night at Urraca Lodge, Jorupe Reserve (near Macara).



The scintillating Rainbow Starfrontlet is one of the hummnigbirds we'll watch for at the hummingbird feeders at Jorupe. Photograph by participant Brian Armstrong.

Days 6-8, Thu-Sat, 27 Feb – 1 Mar. Jorupe/Sozoranga/Utuana area. We will concentrate our birding efforts today in the bizarre, deciduous bombax forests along the beautiful forested roadsides and trails that surround the lodge and work on finding the specialty birds here. Among the many possibilities here are Gray-cheeked Parakeet, Pacific Parrotlet, Gray-capped Cuckoo, Ecuadorian Piculet, Scarlet-backed Woodpecker, Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner, Gray-breasted Flycatcher, One-colored, Cryptic (split from Black-and-white), and Slaty becards, Speckle-breasted Wren, Crimson-breasted Finch, and Black-capped Sparrow. Possibly continuing upslope from Sozoranga for a round of wet-forest montane birding, especially should it be hot and windy down low. We have found that many of the species we've often had to work extra hard for in the past, such as Blackish-headed Spinetail, Rufous-necked Foliage-gleaner, Watkins's Antpitta, and Slaty Becard are regularly found very close to the lodge. While the roads and trails are in relatively good shape, there may be some muddy spots, so make sure your rubber boots are handy. At some point we'll probably want to check out the Chestnut-collared Swallows that nest in the church at Sozoranga. One morning we'll get an early start in order to reach the humid forest above Sozoranga and near Utuana before the fog rolls in. Utuana Forest Reserve is yet another Jocotoco Foundation Reserve that protects remnant evergreen forest at 7800 feet and offers some wonderful trails through epiphyte-laden forest and well developed *Chusquea* bamboo, habitat for Gray-headed Antbird and "Piura" Black-eared Hemispingus. Black-crested Tit-Tyrant and Black-cowled Saltator inhabit the more open areas, and hummingbird feeders here attract Rainbow Starfrontlet and Purple-throated Sunangel, two species rarely seen at feeders. The trails are good, and we'll select our footwear based on the recent weather. We'll also want to try some owling (for Buff-fronted Owl, Peruvian Screech-Owl and Spectacled Owl), either in the evenings or in the pre-dawn hours (bring your small flashlight); some responsive pairs haunt the forests around the cabins. Nights at Urraca Lodge, Jorupe Reserve

Day 9, Sun, 2 Mar. Jorupe to Tapichalaca We'll cover a lot of ground today, choosing our route depending on what birds we are still targeting. Along our route northeastward, we'll pass through varied wet and dry zones, with few stops planned for Tumbes Sparrow but also some Mountain tanagers before reaching Tapichalaca. We will another stop at Malacatos to look for Chestnut-collared Swallow. From Malacatos we'll continue south, through Vilcabamba, to the southern boundary of Podocarpus National Park and the Jocotoco Antpitta reserve at Tapichalaca. Another Ecuadorian reserve established by the Jocotoco Foundation, Tapichalaca protects the type of ridgetop forest preferred by the Jocotoco Antpitta. Our accommodations here are shared—in a beautiful two-story lodge with four bedrooms, each with a private bath and hot-water shower. There is a separate building for guides and drivers. If we arrive in time, we'll enjoy the wonderfully active hummingbird feeders surrounding the lodge where we can hope for Rufous-capped Thornbill among the many more common species. Night at Tapichalaca.

Days 10-11, Mon-Tue, 3-4 Mar. Tapichalaca. We have two-and-a-half days to bird the humid montane east-slope forest of the Quebrada Honda area and down the east slope. The Jocotoco Antpitta search will probably involve some climbing along a couple of mud-boot trails, where rain or fog could materialize at any time—even if we’re lucky enough to arrive during a period when a “trained” antpitta is coming to the trail for earthworms. We will probably spend about equal time birding the roadside and mule trails right where the first pairs of the antpittas were discovered.

Again, we’re hoping for good birding weather, but expect anything from sunny to rainy and windy conditions. Although we will not be at particularly high altitudes, the forest here is somewhat stunted as a result of the often blustery and cold conditions. It’s heartening that such magnificent montane forest, complete with some nice *Podocarpus* trees (heavily timbered and poached for their use in furniture manufacturing), is visible for miles right from the main highway south. In the afternoon, we’ll plan to bird farther down the east slope, at least as far as the good forest occurs; often this works to get below the afternoon fog or rain and get to some new birds as well. Weather permitting, we may want to do some optional evening owling and might even luck into a Swallow-tailed Nightjar.

Day 12, Wed, 5 Mar. Tapichalaca Reserve in the morning, and onward to Quito. After birding the morning, looking for any species that we haven’t seen, we will depart around 10:00 a.m. today to the airport in Loja to catch our flight in the afternoon. Night of day 12 in Quito or late-night flights home (11 p.m. or later).

Day 13, Thu, 6 Mar. Departure for home. We will arrange a transfer to the airport for anyone leaving today. International flights to the US generally depart in the morning and require an early check-in, to arrive mid-day in time for connections home. Have a safe trip home!

About Your Guide

Willy Perez has been leading birding tours for more than ten years. He has also worked as a resident guide at Maquipucuna Reserve on the west slopes of the Andes, on a project protecting marine turtles in Costa Rica, and on bird conservation in northwestern Ecuador. He was a resident guide at Kapawi Lodge in the Ecuadorian Amazon for three years, mastering the art of finding and identifying the many secretive birds of the lowland rainforest. He has since guided throughout Ecuador, including both the east and west slopes of the Andes, the Amazon basin, the Galapagos Islands, and southern Ecuador. During the last few years, he has also guided birding groups in Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. In his free time, he trains local guides and is a frequent lecturer, in English and in Spanish, on birding and conservation issues in the Neotropics.

Willy’s wife, Fiona, is British, and Willy and his family have relocated from Ecuador to England for a few years. He speaks excellent English and has an engaging and outgoing personality that makes every tour he leads a great deal of fun.

*“Guide **Willy Perez** exemplifies the quintessential birding guide: always ‘on’ and totally tuned in to both the surrounding avian environment and the needs of the birders he is guiding. Charismatic, funny, and engaging, Willy made our tour fun, exciting, and immensely memorable.”*
D.B., Ecuador’s Wildsumaco Lodge

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Willy’s complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$5,625 from Guayaquil

DEPOSIT: \$550 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 26, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$525 (Singles may be limited at the Jocotoco Foundation Lodges.)

LIMIT: 8

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Nicole Cannon. Nicole will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations are generally quite good, varying from a very good hotel in Guayaquil to a comfortable hosteria in Quito. We will also spend a total of 10 nights in three beautifully designed lodges at the Jocotoco Foundation reserves. *Singles may be limited at one or more of these lodges so folks may have to double up for those nights.* It's well worth sharing in order to stay right in some of the best birding habitats of the tour, eliminating long round-trip drives from the nearest accommodations of equal quality. At Tapichalaca, several of the rooms are upstairs (let us know if you prefer ground floor). All accommodations have private baths and all have hot-water showers. Overall, we stay in comfort, eat good food, and have good, quiet conditions for sleeping.

DOCUMENTS: A **passport** valid for six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Ecuador. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond the dates of your visit, as regulations vary from country to country, and are subject to change. You will be issued a **tourist card** upon arrival; please keep this in your passport, in a safe place, as you will need the tourist card to depart Ecuador.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Ecuadorian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please note that the tour begins in Guayaquil and ends in Quito. Field Guides is a full-service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is **\$5,625** for one person in double occupancy from Guayaquil. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 12, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 13, the flight from Loja to Quito, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of your tour leader. Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Ecuador, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional additional tips, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is **\$525**. (Singles may not be available at the three Jocotoco Foundation Lodges.) If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$550** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due **180 days** prior to departure, or **by August 26, 2024**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

NCP 7/2020

6/20WP; 7/21NC; 8/21peg; 6/23NC; 723peg; 5/25NC/WP; 6/24peg
Updated 9/24peg