

ITINERARY
HOLIDAY AT SAN ISIDRO, ECUADOR
November 23 – December 2, 2024



*Hummingbirds abound at the San Isidro feeders, including the pugnacious Chestnut-breasted Coronet.
Photograph by participant Paul Bisson.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2024 Field Guides Holiday at San Isidro, Ecuador 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 species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- 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 for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

One of the most common comments we hear from birders after a three- or four-day birding stay in Ecuador's eastern Andes is, "You know, I sure would have loved a few more days here—there's so much to see and explore!" If you'd love to have that extra time, this is your opportunity. We'll be based primarily at a quiet, very comfortable family-run cloud-forest lodge famous for its delicious home-cooked meals; it also just happens to feature a birdlist riddled with such glamorous species as Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, and White-capped Tanager and has become one of the most popular birding destinations in Ecuador.

San Isidro Lodge (a.k.a. Cabañas San Isidro) is an old Ecuadorian hacienda situated at about 6800 feet on the eastern slope of the Andes. Its natural environment has been carefully maintained by the Bustamante family for more than fifty years, and upon arrival one is immediately struck by the forested views on all sides. San Isidro's private reserve

is sandwiched between critical and pristine national park lands that make it all the more rich and beautiful: to the west, temperate forest leads undisturbed right up to distant jagged paramo cliffs (too far to walk to, of course!), while viewing east and south, one can see the forest-cloaked, knife-edge ridges of the Cordillera de Guacamayos. It will be hard to ignore the strange whistles of the loud and gregarious Subtropical Cacique and the chipper song of the Black-billed Peppershrike as they call to us during our first look around. Time to get birding!

Our itinerary begins with an overnight in Quito, after which a cloudless blue morning may allow for a clear view of the “Avenue of the Volcanoes.” Snow-capped peaks, including Cotopaxi, Antisana, and Cayambe, line the crest of Ecuador’s northern Andes. Our first day we will spend most of the time birding the extensive paramos of Antisana Reserve. We will probably want to kick off our birding though, right around the Hotel San Jose de Puenbo, where the gardens attract a nice selection of the inter-Andean species that we always look for in the drier habitats on our way up to the higher areas, Western Emerald, Scrub and Blue-and-yellow Tanagers, Rusty Flowerpiercer, Golden Grosbeak, and Golden-rumped Euphonia among them. After a short bout here, we will set our sights on the extensive highland paramos that blanket the slopes around Volcan Antisana. On a good morning we have excellent chances of finding many of the special species typical of higher elevations, as well as some rarer (more restricted) species, like Andean Condor, Andean Lapwing, Black-faced Ibis, Carunculated Caracara, Ecuadorian Hillstar, Black-winged Ground-Dove, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Many-striped Canastero, and Tawny Antpitta. A short walk to Mica Lake will certainly yield Silvery Grebe, Andean (Ruddy) Duck, Andean Teal, Yellow-billed Pintail, and Slate-colored Coot. A stop at some productive hummingbird feeders en route could very well turn up Giant Hummingbird and Shining Sunbeam... it's all good! The scenery is nothing less than spectacular, and if we have a clear day, Antisana's snow-covered peaks - seemingly within reach - will be seen towering above us to the north. Wrapping up our birding here (early/mid-afternoon), we will back-track to the main highway that leads over the Papallacta Pass, our gateway to the east! Time willing, we will hope to search out a few more paramo species more typical of this area, including Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant, Giant Conebill, or a flock of Black-backed Bush-Tanagers. Then we'll wind down a breathtaking valley, through a variety of montane forest habitats with some of the most dramatic avian treasures of the Andes, from the long-billed Sword-billed Hummingbird to the tiny-billed Mountain Avocetbill, and from the subtly beautiful Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan to the brilliant Turquoise Jay. To make our survey of the eastern slope's riches complete, we'll first spend one night en route to San Isidro at Guango Lodge, with some of the finest hummingbird syrup anywhere!



As we make our way from Quito to San Isidro, we'll go through montane habitats where we'll find some special high-elevation birds, such as this Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe. Photograph by guide Willy Perez.

At San Isidro, we'll have ample time to explore the numerous forest trails and wooded roadsides near the lodge. Just a few possibilities include White-rumped Hawk, Sickle-winged Guan, White-capped Parrot, Golden-headed and Crested quetzals, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Tyrannine Woodcreeper, and Saffron-crowned, Flame-faced, Golden-naped,

Beryl-spangled, and Black-capped tanagers. But this is just the beginning! Within short walking distance of the lodge a Bared Anthrush awaits us somewhere in the understory of dense, mossy bamboo forest, while along the first stretches of a log trail not far away, a Crested Quetzal vies for our attention as it whistles its two-noted song from a high, hidden perch. More than once while enjoying lunch out on the porch, we have lucked into an exquisite group of White-capped Tanagers that travel about in noisy nomadic bands, or a magnificent Black-and-chestnut Eagle taking advantage of the heat waves of a sunny afternoon to soar. A late-afternoon hike down one of the trails below the cabins leads to a small Andean Cock-of-the-rock lek, and we have a good chance of seeing a few of these glorious creatures. And as the sun begins its descent behind the mountains, the Wattled Guans ascend to their favorite singing perches atop tall trees and belt out their strange, far-carrying growls.

During our stay at San Isidro we are bound to run into a rainy morning or afternoon, but not to worry. The hummingbird feeders at the dining room attract a menagerie colorful enough to dazzle anyone: Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Bronzy and Collared incas, Long-tailed Sylph, Sparkling Violetear, Speckled Hummingbird, and Fawn-breasted Brilliant are all regulars. We could even luck into a male Gorgeted Woodstar, a tiny hummer known to hit the feeders from time to time. The forests right next to this very same gazebo often produce Yellow-vented Woodpecker, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, Streak-headed Antbird (split from Long-tailed), Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, and Handsome Flycatcher in a single rainy morning—an impressive collection of attractive birds.



A pair of White-bellied Antpittas has been “trained” to come for worms at a feeder near the dining room, allowing us to get good views of these usually shy birds. Photograph by participant Don Taves.

One of the latest attractions—as seems to be the trend now in Ecuadorian birding—is the taming of a pair of White-bellied Antpittas; the birds emerge from their dark environs to feed on worms laid out for them on the trail. This species can be exceptionally tricky to see under normal birding circumstances, but here, within shouting distance of the dining room, they have learned that enduring a group of eager birders is well worth it. Sometimes it takes more than one try, but we have had mostly excellent luck. Depending on our luck, we may even see a Chestnut-crowned Antpitta coming into gobble down worms at Guango where a pair has recently been habituated, but this species seems to be more temperamental. We will certainly give it a try!

To complete our sampling of the eastern slope's riches, we'll also spend one or two full days of birding in the foothills of the area. How can you top flocks with birds like Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, Deep-blue Flower-piercer, Bronze-green Euphonia, and Orange-eared, Golden, Paradise, and Golden-eared tanagers? Last year we had fantastic studies at both Blue-browed and Vermilion Tanagers. Or how about a Solitary Eagle or Black Hawk-Eagle flying by, or a Coppery-chested Jacamar sitting about? We will also make a stop at a hummingbird feeder station, which are usually very active this time of the year, with the likes of White-tailed Hillstar, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Many-spotted Hummingbird, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Black-throated Brilliant, and even sometimes Wire-crested Thorntail. There is much to see and do, and our San Isidro itinerary promises a delightfully exciting and distracting holiday break in a beautiful, peaceful setting.

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:** Good amounts of walking (up to 2-3 miles per day) along roadsides and trails, some of which will be on even ground, but many of which will be somewhat steep, narrow, uneven, and muddy, with obstacles such as rocks or tree roots. We walk short, somewhat challenging trails almost every other day. Walking sticks can be useful.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We drive for long periods several times on this tour. Participants should be able to step up (and step down) 10-12 inches to get into and out of our vehicles, whether small buses, vans, 4x4 Land Rover-style vehicles, or jeeps. Several roads are rough, and although we drive slowly, there is still a fair bit of bouncing around. We will spend time standing and waiting for birds to appear; a small stool may be handy for this!
- **PACE:** After breakfast (usually at 5:00-5:30 a.m.), we bird until lunch time. We sometimes pack a picnic lunch, to extend our time in the field. Normally, weather permitting, we bird after lunch or (one two days) travel to our next destination. On occasion, we take a siesta of several hours after lunch.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from the low 50s at night in higher elevations to the 80s F in lower elevations during the day. Rain showers are likely, but weather is highly variable, even in short periods of time.
- **ELEVATION:** We reach elevations of up to 13,500 feet on this tour.
- **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:** Participants should be prepared to make comfort stops in nature, as there are simply no other options (away from our lodgings) on many sections of this tour's route.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

Our tour is designed to move around in the vehicle as little as possible and to really get to know and see as many species of mid-elevation birds on Ecuador's eastern slope as possible. The trails at San Isidro are for the most part well maintained (especially those closest to the lodge), with gravel spread across a log bases or used tires, but there can be short muddy and slippery sections since a strong rainy season often takes its toll before proper maintenance arrives; these are almost always easily navigable with a careful step or a helping hand. Since we will be birding in the heart of the Andes, hills and slopes are a way of life, an important part of the ecosystem that drives some of the birds we are trying to see. Since much of our birding takes place at well over a mile high, be prepared for thinner air.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

About the Birding Areas



Antisana Reserve—We decided to incorporate this wonderful side trip to this captivating zone into the itinerary last year as the first day morning venue, and it worked perfectly. Not only does it net a number of species not usually possible in the Papallacta Pass area, but many others are also easier here, so it makes for the perfect complement to a visit to the paramos of the Papallacta Pass; we thought, why not have the best of both worlds... each spot has its candy?!

After some central valley birding after breakfast right around the Hotel San Jose de Puembo, where we will rake in a variety of species typical the drier central valley, we will make a side trip to one of the most accessible and pristine paramo zones in Ecuador, Antisana Reserve. Antisana is probably the best single site in Ecuador for Andean Condor, and they nest on the cliffs that can be scoped right from the roadside; we'll hope to have the luck of an active nest. At any rate, we do have a very good chance of seeing this majestic species soaring overhead at some point during our birding here, no matter what their nesting schedules may be. As we work our way up through the grasslands, we'll be on the lookout for Aplomado Falcon, flushing Black-winged Ground-Dove (not found

on the Papallacta side), Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, and Plain-capped Ground-Tyrant. We actually cross the continental divide on two occasions this day (well three, if you want to get technical!), this being our first, when we cross over and find a beautiful plain of high grasslands where we hope to snag Black-faced Ibis, Andean Lapwing, and sometimes the largest congregation of Carunculated Caracaras to be found anywhere. We can often drive right up to all of these species, so will hope for this luck. All the while we'll be on the lookout for paramo species that will pop up along the way - maybe Paramo Pipit, and Chestnut-winged and Stout-billed Cinclodes - as we make our way to Mica Lake. Once at the lake, we will have opportunity to scope some individuals of the largest population of Silvery Grebe in the country, as well as plenty of other water fowl.

Birds are our primary quarry, but we also stand good chances at turning up some interesting mammals as well; last year we had plenty of White-tailed Deer, and even clinched scope views of a Spectacled Bear as it fed on terrestrial bromeliads!

We will probably head back down to the main Papallacta highway in the early afternoon (during quiet hours), to cross the continental divide once again for the last time until our final day of the trip, and set our sights on a few more paramo birds before descending to Guango Lodge for the night.

Papallacta Pass—As one heads east out of Quito, the main road to the Oriente climbs through shrubby canyons and slopes of the intermontane valley—relatively arid as they are in the rain shadow of both eastern and western cordilleras. A few species—from Giant Hummingbird and Black-tailed Trainbearer to Shining Sunbeam and Blue-and-yellow Tanager—do not occur at other sites on our tour.

After climbing through cultivated fields and natural temperate shrub (watch for Andean Condor), the road crosses the eastern cordillera at Papallacta Pass—just an hour from our hotel—where it runs a short distance through paramo at elevations up to about 14,000 feet, thence down the east slope into the lowlands. The wet grasslands near the pass are especially fine, the bunch grass rank, and the landscape everywhere inflected with *Puya* bloom stalks. The marshes support a small population of Noble Snipe, and the highest slopes—covered with lichens and brain-coral-like cushion plant—are home to the Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, here at the northern extent of its lofty range. Sizable patches of *Polylepis* woodlands are host to a fascinating little set of birds that travel around in fast-moving, cohesive flocks. The prize find is the Giant Conebill, a bird almost never found away from this strange high-elevation forest habitat. Other species that we will be on the lookout for are Pearled Treerunner, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Many-striped Canastero, Tawny Antpitta, White-throated Tyrannulet, Black-backed Bush-Tanager, and Pale-naped Brush-Finch.



*The lovely Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan is one of the Andean specialties we'll watch for at Guango Lodge.
Photograph by guide Mitch Lysinger.*

Guango Lodge—We will spend one night at Guango Lodge, at the edge of some of the best temperate forest to be accessed on the eastern slope in Ecuador. If the weather is right (we always hope for sunny early morns, cloudy but calm mid-days, and then a bit of late-afternoon sun), we could encounter the resident roving mixed-species flock with species typical of the eastern temperate zone: Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher, Black-eared and Black-capped Hemispingus, Hooded Mountain-Tanager, Slaty Brush-Finch, and Northern Mountain-Cacique are all possibilities. This is also our best chance for the striking Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan.

As if the flycatchers, tanagers, and other flock gems were not enough, the real jewels at Guango come to the hummingbird feeders on the porch. The species list now includes Sword-billed Hummingbird, Buff-tailed and Chestnut-breasted Coronets, Mountain Avocetbill (sneaky; watch carefully!), Glowing Puffleg, Mountain Velvetbreast, Long-tailed Sylph, and lots of handsome Tourmaline Sunangels.

Because we will have a night here, it will also be a little easier to bird the best sites at a more leisurely pace. Other birds to be found either on the property or only a short drive away include Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Dusky Piha, and Red-hooded Tanager. The temperate zone is an area that reveals its treasures slowly, so we are truly fortunate to have the opportunity to bird it more thoroughly.

San Isidro—Mid-elevation subtropical cloud forest surrounds San Isidro on all sides and makes for some truly spectacular views and unforgettable birding. At an elevation of about 6800 feet, the comfortable Cabañas San Isidro will be our main base of operations for the tour. This is one of the best places to seek out many of the most sought-after Andean species, such as Andean, Watted, and Sickle-winged guans, Rufous-banded Owl, Andean Potoo, Swallow-tailed Nightjar, Crested Quetzal, Greater Scythebill, White-capped Tanager, and Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager. A number of beautiful forest trails branch out from our lodge, and we will spend much of our time in search of numerous specialties of the area as well as species more widespread along the east slope of the Andes. Of all of the sites for Andean Cock-of-the-rock in Ecuador, the lek at San Isidro is one of the most easily accessible—only a twenty-minute walk from the cabins along a good trail, but there are some steep sections. We will have the chance to see this fabled species as well as many others along the trails and roadsides in the area. Rufous-bellied Nighthawk, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Yellow-vented and Powerful woodpeckers, White-bellied and Slate-crowned antpittas, Variegated and Marble-faced bristle-tyrants, Long-tailed (Equatorial Rufous-vented), Blackish (Unicolored), and Ash-colored tapaculos, Green-and-black and Black-chested fruiteaters, Bluish Flowerpiercer, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, and Saffron-crowned, Blue-and-black, and Rufous-crested tanagers are only a few of the species typical of the zone that we may see. And there's the fascinating "Black-

banded/Black-and-white Owl” that has been resident around the buildings for several years now—at an elevation too high for normal Black-banded Owls, and yet on the wrong side of the Andes for its close relative, the Black-and-white Owl. The San Isidro birds look somewhat intermediate between the two and could even represent a distinct highland species, but no other population of these birds has been found.

Aside from its unique set of birds, San Isidro offers some of the best dining to be found at any of the lodges in Ecuador. Imaginative and delicious meals will be waiting for us in the main house each evening. For those looking for some relaxation between and/or after birding bouts, the lodge's ample, heated pool awaits - water temperatures hovering around 88-90 degrees, and with gorgeous views of the surrounding forest - so don't forget that swim suit if this entices you!



*The Coppery-chested Jacamar is almost endemic to Ecuador, where they are found on the east slope of the Andes.
Photograph by participant Lance Runion.*

Upper Tropical Foothill Forests—Only a short drive down the eastern slope we will find ourselves in humid foothill forest that eventually gives way to the Amazonian lowlands. Considered one of the most biodiverse areas in the world, it features staggering bird possibilities. We will devote one or two full days to this area and will be able to commute to and from the area over a road that is now finally paved, cutting the driving time substantially from the bumpy, washboard mess it used to be. Most of our birding will be done at elevations between 3600 and 4500 feet, but depending on time and weather we may spend more time a little higher or lower.

Much of our birding will take place along the roadside, where impressive flocks can be seen right from the forest edge. A typical mixed flock could contain any of the following species: Ash-browed Spinetail, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Yellow-breasted Antwren, Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, Bronze-green Euphonia, and Vermilion, Golden-eared, Blue-browed, and Orange-eared tanagers. When not under the spell of one of the marvelous flocks, we will spend our time searching out many of the other eastern Andean foothill specialties that are more likely to be found away from bird parties. Napo Sabrewing, Wire-crested Thorntail, Ecuadorian Piedtail, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Black-billed Treehunter, Dusky Spinetail, Lined Antshrike, White-browed Antbird, White-backed Fire-eye, Golden-winged Tody-Flycatcher, Yellow-cheeked Becard, White-thighed Swallow, Olivaceous Greenlet, and Deep-blue Flowerpiercer are all birds that we regularly see on our trips here. Aside from the large assortment of foothill species, there is also a variety of interesting (mainly lowland) species that reach their upper elevational limits here, such as Golden-collared Toucanet, Black Antbird, Ornate Antwren, White-winged Becard, Coraya Wren, and Paradise Tanager.



Black-banded Owls from the cloudforest around San Isidro may actually be an unnamed species, as they seem to be slightly different from Black-banded Owls elsewhere. Photograph by participant Diane Drobka.

Itinerary for Holiday at San Isidro, Ecuador

Day 1, Sat, 23 Nov. To Quito. Please plan to arrive in Quito any time today. Our office will arrange for transportation from the airport to the Hotel San Jose de Puembo (make sure we have your arrival flight information so we can set this up!). Mitch will contact you (or leave a message for you at the front desk if you are arriving late) with meeting instructions for the next morning; we plan on having a 5:30 a.m. breakfast. Since most flights arrive into Quito late in the evening, **we suggest arriving a day early.** We can help you make arrangements for an English-speaking guide if you like. Night in Quito.

Day 2, Sun, 24 Nov. Antisana Reserve and Papallacta Pass, to Guango Lodge. After an early breakfast at the hotel, we will "stake-out" some the central valley birds to be found right on the birdy grounds. Our main targets will be Western Emerald (a recent split from Blue-tailed), Rusty Flowerpiercer, Scrub and Blue-and-yellow tanagers, and Golden Grosbeak, but there are certainly plenty more. After we are satisfied, we will load bags, and drive straight to Antisana Reserve (about an hour and 15 minutes to get to where we start our activities), where we will spend the bulk of the day exploring and birding the scenic moorland-like paramo habitats. Depending on the weather, we may need to start layering up, so make sure to have your cold weather gear handy (this will potentially be one of the coldest days of the trip); our bus will have plenty of room accommodate all of our gear and garments!

After a full morning birding the high paramos around Antisana, hopefully with Andean Condor, Black-faced Ibis, Silvery Grebe, and Giant Hummingbird already in our pockets, we will head back down to the central valley to reconnect with the main highway that heads east, up and over the Papallacta Pass. As we start to climb up the western slope of the eastern cordillera (once again) towards the windswept paramo, the forest becomes a bit more humid and we will probably want to start layering up again! The continental divide is our next stop to squeeze in some final afternoon birding, and temperatures are sure to plummet unless we luck out and have a cloudless calm day. We will spend the remainder of the day birding the bizarre treeless paramo zone and strange stunted elfin woodlands near Papallacta Pass before our arrival at Guango Lodge. Variable (Puna) Hawk, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Andean and/or Noble snipe, Chimborazo Hillstar, White-chinned Thistletail, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, and Giant Conebill are all on our hit list. Given decent weather, the scenery alone atop Papallacta is a wonderfully exciting panorama very different from the familiar habitats of North America. If clear, we will enjoy breath-taking views of snow-capped Antisana Volcano, from the opposite side.

We will be met at Guango Lodge in the evening by our hosts for a warm welcome drink by the fireplace. Night at Guango Lodge.

Day 3, Mon, 25 Nov. Guango Lodge to San Isidro. The major advantage of staying at Guango Lodge for a night is to rise early and be right in the middle of temperate forest habitat at first light—something that is hard to do when starting from Quito. We may spend good a part of our morning on the grounds of the lodge, working the flocks as well as trying to pry out a willing antpitta or tapaculo, or decide to head back up to the higher elevations for a another go depending on our luck the previous day and the weather. The target birds are many, but a good morning can be rewarding. Torrent Duck, Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, and Turquoise Jay are right outside our doorstep. Depending on the weather and the birds we have already seen, we may have another opportunity this morning to visit the treeline zone where may even get lucky with a couple of rare mountain-tanagers: the Masked and Black-chested, if the weather cooperates, and providing we can find the right flock. After lunch at the lodge, we will probably have a last look around the grounds, and then want to start our descent down slope towards San Isidro. On the way there we will stop at a few hot birding sites... and temperatures will probably start warming up a bit. Some of us might even be able to get away with a T-shirt once we get lower!

Depending on the weather and our time, we will get into San Isidro for some late-afternoon or evening birding. Owned by a lover of nature who welcomes birders—and also happens to be Mitch Lysinger’s wife, Carmen—San Isidro offers delicious and original home-style meals between birding forays. Set in a forested garden, the cabañas are within earshot of “Black-banded” Owls and displaying Wattled Guans and are but minutes away from some tremendous east-slope, subtropical birding. Here, too, you’ll want your umbrella whenever you walk up to the dining area, and bring your flashlight mornings and evenings. Watch for Rufous-bellied Nighthawk on the way to the dining room. Night at San Isidro.



The tiny Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher is one of the cutest birds we'll see. These little birds are often seen in the bamboo around San Isidro. Photograph by participant Richard Kaskan.

Days 4-8, Tue-Sat, 26-30 Nov. San Isidro. We'll orchestrate our time depending on the weather, but our general plan is to devote the first couple of days to birding the forest trails and roadsides in the San Isidro area. The lodge list is now well over 300 species, and many of them are some of the most sought-after birds in the Andes. What makes San Isidro such a great place for birding, besides the comfortable accommodations and wonderful hospitality, is that we will be spending very little time in our vehicle; we'll do most birding from the lodge on foot or only a short drive from the lodge itself. As with any Andean habitat, finding many of the special birds takes time, and this is just what we have!

On one of the days at San Isidro, we will want to spend a full morning birding the famous Guacamayos ridge trail. Some of the more exciting species that we have seen here on recent tours include Emerald-bellied Puffleg, Crested

Quetzal, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, White-faced Nunbird (very rare), Greater Scythebill (rare, but we had awesome views last year at very close range), Barred Antthrush, and Dusky Piha. We have even heard (at close range!) the rare and little-known Moustached Antpitta. We won't see all these goodies on any one trip, but we are sure to see a few! More regularly seen species include Green-and-black Fruiteater, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Rufous Wren, Grass-green Tanager, and Hooded Mountain-Tanager. Aside from the fabulous birds, the forest is some of the most beautiful and intact accessible habitat to be found anywhere on the eastern slope of the Andes at this elevation.

On one or two days, we plan to start early and continue down to the Loreto road for foothill birding. As the sun peeks up over the Amazon basin, we will cross the Guacamayos ridge crest and start our descent down the east slope. If it is a clear day, the view is spectacular and one can see for miles out over the expanse of foothills that eventually give way to the Amazonian lowland rainforest. What lies ahead is an almost entirely different assortment of bird species of the eastern Andean foothills. We will likely spend most of one morning on the south slope of the Guacamayos as we bird along the roadside in the upper foothills at about 1300 to 1600 meters elevation; this can be very good for many of the east slope tanager species. We'll also spend some time birding along the Loreto Road, now famous for its large number of species. Orange-breasted Falcon, Blackish Nightjar (day roosting) Coppery-chested Jacamar, Cliff Flycatcher, Olive-chested Flycatcher, the fairly recently described Foothill Elaenia, Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, and Blue-naped Chlorophonia are all frequently recorded along the road.

We will save plenty of time too for watching the hummingbird feeders (with Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Long-tailed Sylph, and Collared Inca, among others) and viewing the small cock-of-the-rock lek right at San Isidro. There's so much to see we may be wishing we had yet another week! Nights at San Isidro.

Day 9, Sun, 1 Dec. Return to Quito. We'll spend our last morning of birding in the area(s) where we have the most new species to see, perhaps back up into the temperate forest near Guango and Papallacta Lake. In the afternoon we will work our way back to Quito. We anticipate reaching our hotel in plenty of time to clean up and reorganize for the trip home before our farewell dinner at the hotel restaurant. Participants may either fly out late night tonight or spend the night in Quito at the Hotel San Jose de Puembo before flights home tomorrow; either way, you will have a room in which to relax, repack and clean up a bit before dinner. Be sure to advise our office of your departure time so a transfer may be arranged. Night in Quito or on a flight home.

Day 10, Mon, 2 Dec. Arrival home. Those with morning flights will be picked up at our hotel and transferred to the airport in time for a comfortable check-in.

About Your Guide

Mitch Lysinger, a native of Florida, grew up birding the southern part of the state as well as other parts of the US before moving to Ecuador to work at La Selva Lodge (for two years) and then with Field Guides since 1997. Mitch is fascinated by bird sounds and has spent many years intensively birding and tape-recording the birds of Ecuador and other Neotropical countries on tours and in his free time. As a result (and hundreds of field-recorded cassettes later!), Mitch and John Moore teamed up and published the two-volume cassette *The Birds of Cabanas San Isidro*, and then went on to tackle (with other co-authors) the multi-volume CD set—with four published and more to come—of the birds of Ecuador. An updated CD of *The Birds of Cabanas San Isidro* by Mitch, John Moore, and Niels Krabbe was published in 2011.

Mitch has more recently become involved in the conservation scene in Ecuador, working closely with the Jocotoco Foundation on land purchase for the purpose of setting up new reserves in areas critically in need of protection. When not on tour, Mitch can often be found with his wife, Carmen, and their two children (Martin and Sara) at San Isidro Lodge—their cloudforest lodge on the east slope of the Andes—where they see to the needs of their guests and the reserve, a reserve that forms a forest corridor that bridges the gap between two large national parks.

Please visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Mitch's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

"Mitch Lysinger! He is amazing in his ability to spot and hear birds; to call them in; to accommodate each individual; and to stay cheerful, patient, and energetic...we saw the beautiful birds we had really wished to see!"
R. & D.S., Montane Ecuador

Financial Information

FEE: \$3675 per person from Quito

DEPOSIT: \$375 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: May 27, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$400

LIMIT: 8

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one). Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

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 in Quito will be at the Hotel San Jose de Puenbo close to the airport. Guango Lodge, where we spend one night, and San Isidro, our main base for the trip, are both quaint, family-owned lodges with guest cabins with 24-hour electricity, comfortable beds, and private baths with hot water. Laundry service is available at San Isidro for an extra charge.

A NOTE ON ALTITUDE: On our first and last days of birding, we will reach elevations as high as 4300 meters (14,000 feet) near the Papallacta Pass. While we do plan to bird there, weather permitting—blizzard conditions are not uncommon—we will move at a slow pace and have the vehicle nearby at all times.

DOCUMENTS: A **passport** valid for six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Ecuador. You will be issued a **tourist card** upon arrival; please keep this in a safe place, as you will need it 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: 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.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is **\$3675** for one person in double occupancy from Quito. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 9, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through dinner on Day 9, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). 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 Quito, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is **\$400**. 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 \$375** 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 May 27, 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 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 tour fee is refundable. 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

2/21 NC, peg; 7/22NC; peg; 4/23 NC; peg; 2/24NC; 4/24peg