

Ecuador: Biodiversity Across the Andes Species List | March 4 – 17, 2025 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by host Rick Weiman with 6 adventurous clients that included Noel, Cecilia, Barb, Diane, Jim, and Holly with local guide Andrea Molina.

The southern Andes Mountains of Ecuador are a highly complex system of mountain-ridges and valleys, providing a great variety of habitats within a small geographic area. During this tour we stayed at three Jocotoco Foundation reserves, first for three nights at the Umbrellabird Lodge in the Buenaventura Reserve, in the foothills of the western side of the Andes. Our next stop was Copalinga Lodge, adjacent to the magnificent Podocarpus National Park on the upper montane of eastern Ecuador. At Casa Simpson in the Tapichalaca Reserve, we also had close access to the subtropical areas of Podocarpus National Park. Tapichalaca Reserve is situated just across the Continental Divide on the east (or Amazonian) slope of the Andes, adjoining the southern extremity of Podocarpus National Park and just north of the Peruvian frontier, making it an integral part of a significant conservation corridor in southern Ecuador. We then spent a night in Loja, visiting the oldest botanical garden in Ecuador, a local park, and an early morning trip to UTPL University campus to find a roosting pair of Koepcke's Screech-Owls. Finally, we enjoyed the windswept paramos of Cajas National Park and our beautiful lodging at Hacienda Dos Chorreras (two waterfalls). On our last day of the tour we had a lovely historic tour of the beautiful city of Cuenca before our flight back to our departure city Quito.

Some trip highlights were close views of a flock of the beautiful and scarce El Oro Parakeet at Buenaventura Reserve, only discovered in 1980. We also hiked at a trail named after the iconic Long-wattled Umbrellabird and had great views of a male and his extraordinary wattle. At Tapichalaca Reserve we had close up views of two Chestnut-naped Antpittas, and later in the tour at Cajas National Park a Tawny Antpitta and a brilliant male Ecuadorian Hillstar.

We witnessed many mixed flocks of colorful tanagers, hummingbirds, woodcreepers, warblers, and flycatchers, including several Tumbesian and Chocó regions endemics, and we were lucky enough to spot 2 Ecuador endemic species: Violet-throated Metaltail, and the previously mentioned El Oro Parakeet.

The species report eBird link below for the main part of the tour from March 5 – 16 details the 315 species of birds our group either observed or heard during the main tour.

[Ecuador: Biodiversity Across the Andes | March 4-17, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

The second eBird report link includes all of the main tour dates plus the March 4 early arrival date and the birds observed around the gardens and trails of the San Jose de Puembo Hotel in Quito by the early arrivers (Rick, Noel, Cecilia, and Holly). It also includes the birds from the March 17 Antisana extension Rick and Holly participated in with Andrea. This report brings the total number of birds seen or heard on the entire tour to an impressive 331 species, including 38 species of hummingbirds alone!

If you're new to eBird, be sure to click on "Show All Details" on the right side of the list as this will expand the report to show you where and when all of the birds were seen and how many.

The following is a list of additional mammal, reptile, and amphibian species we were also lucky enough to find during the trip.

MAMMALS (6)

Black Agouti *Dasyprocta fuliginosa*—Several were observed near dusk and dawn at Copalinga Lodge, enjoying the cracked corn at the feeder area.

Guayaquil Squirrel *Sciurus stramineus*—Spotted early in the tour on two consecutive days in the Buenaventura Reserve forests.

Western Mountain Coati *Nasuella olivacea*—A regular fan of the sugar water at the hummingbird feeders at the Umbrellabird Lodge. One morning a family of four showed up, digging in the earth for grubs near the lodge dining area.

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*—Rick & Holly witnessed large herds of twenty or more in the high elevation paramos of the Antisana region on the extension.

Brown-mantled Howler Monkey *Alouatta palliata*—Heard calling on several days in the Buenaventura Reserve but never observed.

Andean Tapeti *Sylvilagus andinus*—Also known as the Andean Cottontail; multiple sightings at Hacienda Dos Chorreras and in Cajas National Park.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (4)

Green Iguana *Iguana iguana*—Spotted in a tree near the heron and spoonbill rookery in the Manglares Churute Ecological Reserve by Lake La Lagartera.

Anthony's Poison Arrow Frog *Epipedobates anthonyi*—We spotted and photographed several of these small striped frogs in wet areas during our visit to the Buenaventura Reserve. They are known only from a number of locations in southwestern Ecuador and northwestern Peru at heights of between 500 and 5,800 ft above sea level.

Monitor Tegu *Callopiastes flavipunctatus*—A very large lizard (3 feet long at least) that was sitting in the middle of the road as we drove into Arenillas Ecological Reserve. Jim captured some nice photos before it ran off. They are native to the Tumbesian lowlands of southwestern Ecuador and northwestern Perú. Their omnivorous diet includes lizards, snakes, rodents, birds, large insects, flowers, and fruits.

Collared Whorltail-Iguana *Stenocercus humeralis*—Noel initially spotted an adult perched on the top of a fence post as we ate lunch in the Reinaldo Espinosa Botanical Garden in Loja. Later, a brightly colored juvenile was found near it. This insectivorous lizard is native to the Pacific slopes of the Andes in southern Ecuador (provinces Loja and Zamora Chinchipe) and northern Per