

Ecuador

28 January-12 February 2000

Participants:

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**Leaders: Lelis Navarrete, Oscar
and Tony Nunnery**



Picture: Grey Potoo

Although this tour report follows my usual format, because of the sheer numbers of species seen during the tour, only the highlights will be included in this report. Please refer to the checklist however, for a full list of species seen.

Day 1: An Iberian flight from London Heathrow to Quito via Madrid. Whilst in Madrid, we were able to see a few species from the departure lounge including Spotless Starling. Arrived in Quito in the evening where Mercedes, the co-owner of Neblina Forest, met us. We were transferred through the city in heavy rain and arrived at our excellent four-star hotel where we were staying for just one night.

Day 2: An early start and we stood at the hotel entrance watching Great Thrush and Rufous-collared Sparrow as we waited for our guide and transport. Lelis arrived on time with Lois the driver in a four-wheel drive vehicle. Lois is the father of Xavier the co-owner of Neblina Forest so it is a real family affair. Quito is a long narrow city at an altitude of about 9,000' so it took some time to get into the countryside. At the first opportunity however, we stopped in dry hillside habitat for our first real taste of Neotropical birding. New birds came thick and fast with Azara's Spinetail, Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Yellow Grosbeak, Ash-breasted Sierra-finch, Band-tailed Seed eater, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Sparkling Violator, Cinereous Conebill, Rusty Flowerpiercer, Tufted Tit-tyrant, Golden-rumped Euphonia, Grassland Yellow-finch, Eared Dove and Variable Hawk all seen. Although we failed to see Giant Hummingbird because of the lack of suitable flowers, we did see White-tailed Shrike-tyrant; another highly sought after speciality. Other more familiar species from North America included American Kestrel and Common Ground-dove. Moving on, we drove along the side of a steep ravine where regular landslides were evident. Some good patches of cloudforest were evident but with even better habitat to visit, we carried on. Eventually, we reached the Tandayapa Pass road which, although in poor condition with a four-wheel drive being absolutely necessary, is well worth the effort. Stopping at the first suitable looking spot, we were unfortunately greeted by rain as we left the vehicle. Finding a sheltered spot by an old building however, we were able to bird comfortably. A feeding flock contained a number of species including Montane Woodcreeper, Tropical Parula, Golden, Golden-naped and White-winged Tanagers, Blackburnian & Black-and-white Warblers, Slate-throated redstart and Brown-capped Vireo. Blue-and-white Swallows flew overhead whilst Variable Seed eaters feed by the side of the road. A Tawny-bellied Hermit was found on a nest under a palm leaf. Arriving at the new Tandayapa Lodge where we were staying for two nights, we were greeted with a choice of drinks and took a short break in the heat of the middle of the day. Watching the hummingbird feeders was productive however, with Buff-tailed Coronet, Booted Racket-tail, Fawn-breasted Brilliant and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird all seen. In the late afternoon we walked on of the lodge's trails adding Buff-throated Saltator, Three-striped Warbler, Red-headed Barbet, Blue-winged Mountain-tanager, Streak-necked Flycatcher, Greater Pewee, White-tipped Dove and Yellow-breasted Seed eater to our lists. A Black-and-chestnut Eagle flew around the ridge and flocks of Red-billed Parrots were seen. An excellent evening meal was taken but unfortunately the Rufous-bellied Nighthawk only showed briefly.

Day 3: A very early start to be on the trails at dawn. At first, birding was extremely difficult with plenty heard but little seen and rain. Birding with an umbrella is however, an acquired art in the neotropics and soon we were soon seeing an Immaculate Antbird, a very difficult bird. Other birds soon followed with Uniform Antshrike, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Beryl-spangled, Black-capped, Fawn-breasted, Flame-faced, Metallic-green and Summer Tanagers, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Flavescent Flycatcher, Olivaceous Piha, White-winged Becard, White-tailed Tyrannulet, Marble-faced Bristle-tyrant, Chestnut-capped Brush-finch (chasing the red spot of a laser pointer!), Masked Trogon and Wedge-billed Hummingbird. After lunch we visited Tony Nunnery's property nearby and from his porch added Speckled Hummingbird, Violet-tailed Sylph, Brown & Collared Incas, Andean Emerald and Empress Brilliant all on the feeders. A Purple-bibbed Whitetip was seen at the top of an adjacent tree, Band-tailed Pigeons flew over and Black-faced Grassquits fed on the lawn. Tony's beautiful house has one of the most spectacular views I have ever seen and he has created several of his own trails in his 40 hectares of cloudforest. We returned to Tony's house after dark but unfortunately none of the owls were co-operative.

Day 4: An early start driving down the Tandayapa Pass before daylight. Several Rufous-bellied Nighthawks showed well together with Band-winged Nightjars but a single Swallow-tailed Nightjar was a nice surprise. We made several stops before arriving at Bellavista Lodge still in excellent cloudforest, where we took coffee. Birds seen included the spectacular Toucan Barbet, Plate-billed Mountain-toucan, Chestnut-mandibled Toucan, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Yellow-bellied Chat-tyrant, Powerful Woodpecker, Plain-tailed Wren, Black-crested Warbler and best of all, excellent views of a Chestnut-crowned Antpitta. Continuing on towards Mindo, we stopped in an area of mixed habit with some cultivation and scattered trees where Ecuadorian Thrush, Yellow Tyrannulet and Roadside Hawk were all seen whilst White-collared Swifts zoomed overhead. After passing through the town of Mindo, we worked the area around the bridge where we saw our first Smooth-billed Anis of the tour and after a cat and mouse game, a single Little Cuckoo, a much more skulking and difficult species to see. Moving further along the track, a small party of Bay Wrens were found but proved difficult to see well at first as they were constantly on the move. Bran-coloured and Rusty-margined Flycatchers and Glossy-black Thrush were all new as we walked further along the track to get into position to look for nightjars at dusk. Dusk arrived and Lyre-tailed Nightjars first started calling above us then showed briefly. However what was to follow took us all by surprise. A male Lyre-tailed Nightjar was seen sitting on a ledge of the adjacent cliffs and obligingly sat still as we watched it by spotlight. The tail was in superb condition and when it eventually flew it went right past us showing it to good effect. Returning to the vehicle we drove the tortuous 10-km track to Mindo Gardens arriving in the rain. We were shown to our excellent rooms in log cabin blocks and as there was a load roaring noise, I assumed that it was the air conditioning. Looking for a switch to turn it off, it eventually dawned on me that the noise was from the waterfall next to the cabin! After settling in, we walked back to the comfortable main log house for drinks and an excellent dinner.

Day 5: A Mottled Owl sitting under the light outside interrupted an early breakfast! We suffered the track out to Mindo again seeing Rufous-bellied Nighthawks again and as we drove along the road from Mindo towards the main Quito road, we were rewarded for our suffering with a Grey Potoo perched on a fence post and excellent views of a Band-winged Nightjar. Our destination today was an area containing remnants of Choco Forest. Sadly, the area is being rapidly logged but in the remnant patches birding was some of the best I have encountered anywhere in the world. In fact at times, it was almost impossible to keep up with everything! There were literally feeding flocks everywhere in the forest and new birds included Bay-headed, Blue-grey, Blue-necked, Golden-hooded, Grey-and-gold, Palm, Guira, Scarlet-browed, Swallow, Tawny-crested and White-shouldered, an amazing 12 species of tanagers, White-eyed & White-tailed Trogons, Plain-brown & Spotted Woodcreepers, Grey-capped, Piratic, Rudy-tailed, Rusty-margined, Slaty-capped & Social Flycatchers, Checker-throated, Dot-winged & Griscomb's Antwrens, Chestnut-backed Antbird and Orange-billed Sparrow. Hummingbirds included Purple-crowned Fairy, Green Thorntail and Purple-chested & Violet-bellied Hummingbirds, parrots Maroon-tailed Parakeet and Bronze-winged Parrot, Pale-billed Aracari, Dusky Pigeon, Black-capped Pygmy-tyrant, Common Tody-flycatcher, Brown-capped & Sooty-headed Tyrannulets, Lesser Greenlet, Rufous Motmot, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Cinnamon & One-coloured Becards, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Spot-crowned Antvireo, Russet Antshrike, Green & Purple Honeycreepers, Yellow-tufted Dacnis, White-vented Euphonia, Bananaquit, Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner and Plain Xenops, the list just goes on and on. Even over the open logged areas birds could be found including Guayaquil Woodpecker, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift and White-thighed Swallow. When the forest started to quieten around the middle of the day, we drove down to the river where we ate our packed lunches. Even then birding continued with American Swallow-tailed & Plumbeous Kites, American Black & turkey Vultures flying over, Choco Toucan, seen on a distant tree, Pacific Hornero, Squirrel & Striped Cuckoos, male White-bearded Manakins displaying with their loud 'wing cracking' and best of all, Purple-throated Fruitcrow. As is normally the case in rainforest birding, not everyone sees everything so after lunch, we returned to the forest, not only allowing us second chances to catch up with species but to add new ones. This was undoubtedly the best day of the tour and it was with great reluctance that with dusk approaching, we had to leave to return to Mindo Gardens.

Day 6: After breakfast we followed a very muddy trail high up the slope above Mindo Gardens. Arriving at the ridge, birding was interrupted by heavy showers but once again the poncho and the umbrella came in handy! New birds were hard to find in the conditions but we still managed to add Yellow-throated Bush-tanager, Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner, Ornate Flycatcher, Glistening-green & Rufous-throated Tanagers, Golden-olive Woodpecker and Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant. With the weather deteriorating, we headed back down the slope, which by now was extremely muddy. Arriving back at Mindo Gardens we were able to have a shower and pack before lunch. After lunch the weather improved and we added Torrent Tyrannulet, Green-crowned Brilliant, White-whiskered Hermit, Blackpoll Warbler and Southern House Wren to our lists before leaving for Quito.

Several stops were made on our return journey adding Southern Beardless-tyrannulet and Sierran Elaenia before we arrived in the capital and checked into our hotel again, saying goodbye to Lelis and Lois.

Day 7: We were met by Tony, Mercedes son, at 08.30 and taken to the airport for an internal flight to Coca at 10.30. At the airport a representative of Sacha Lodge met us. The 40-minute flight was superb with stunning views of Volcan Cayambe, at 5,790 metres. At Coca we were again met by a Sacha Lodge representative and transferred to the river where we birded whilst we waited for the boat to arrive from the lodge, seeing Great Kiskadee, Black-billed Thrush, White-winged Swallow and Grey-breasted Martin. The lodge is only accessible by river. Once on the river, we settled down for our two and a half-hour journey on the large motorised pirogue with packed lunches provided. As well as the helmsman, we had a navigator on the prow of the boat to watch out for underwater obstructions and Oscar our native guide. Not long after we left Coca we stopped by an oil pipeline crossing the river where Sand-coloured Nighthawks were roosting. Our progress down the Rio Negro (a tributary of the Amazon) was erratic and slow at times but always interesting with rainforest on both banks and the occasional indian village or oil camp. A close watch was kept on the sandbars and by doing this we spotted Pied Lapwing, Cocoi Heron and Large-billed & Yellow-billed Terns. Several Swallow-wings were also seen perched on riverside trees. We eventually arrived at the landing stage (actually just a sandbank!) and continued our journey on foot. Fortunately, there were porters to carry the suitcases! Progress was slow because there were birds to be seen, Black-fronted Nunbirds, Scarlet-crowned Barbet and Yellow-rumped Caciques being the highlight. Arriving on a boardwalk, we took a side-track where a Tawny-bellied Screech-owl was roosting in a hole in a tree. The boardwalk eventually led to a boathouse where we took a much smaller pirogue with paddles. Down a narrow creek then onto a large lagoon with Sacha Lodge on the other side. Disembarking, we were led up to our rooms where our luggage was already neatly stowed. Despite its remoteness, the cabins were all very clean and tidy with en-suite WC and showers, electricity and fans. All of the cabins were joined to the central dining room and bar and a number of trails radiated out inland. After lunch Oscar took us for a walk along one of the trails in this pristine rainforest. Woodpeckers were very much in evidence with Chestnut, Cream-coloured, Crimson-crested & Scaly-breasted Woodpeckers all seen. The skulkers included White-flanked Antwren and Black-faced Antthrush but the absolute highlight was a pair of Crested Owls roosting out in the open, what a time for my camera to pack up! An interesting diversion was a Red Howler Monkey. Returning to the lodge for our evening meal (the food is excellent here) Oscar had a surprise for us, we were going for a walk in the forest again after dark! Keeping a careful eye open for Jaguars, we carefully walked along the paths trying to avoid the tree roots until we reached the huge buttressed trunk of a Mahogany tree. Oscar produced his torch and proceeded to look in every crevice, eventually beckoning us over to show us what he had found, a Long-billed Woodcreeper and a Short-billed Leaf-tosser. Both extremely difficult birds to see but he knew the best way to find them. Over the next few days we found Oscar to be an absolutely amazing guide, what he didn't know about the birds and the forest wasn't worth knowing.

Day 8: A pre-breakfast walk gave us Violaceous Jay, Thrush-like Wren and Speckled Chachalaca. Once more we set off into the forest, this time on a different trail. Forest birding can be incredibly frustrating, often hearing a lot but seeing little, it is however, also very rewarding. After a cat and mouse game, we eventually all saw a Ringed Antpiper. By walking very slowly and quietly we soon accumulated a good number of new species including Blue-backed, Blue-crowned & Wire-tailed Manakins, Chestnut-belted Gnateater, Straight-billed hermit, Plain-throated Antwren, Gray-headed, Green-and-gold & Opal-rumped Tanagers, White-necked Puffbird, two more very skulking birds Black-faced Antbird and Rusty-belted Tapaculo, Golden-collared Toucanet, Great Jacamar, Ivory-billed Aracari, White-fronted Nunbird, Spot-winged Antshrike, Black-spotted Barbet and Cinnamon-throated, Olivaceous & Wedge-billed Woodcreepers. The most evocative sound of tropical rainforest, the Screaming Piha, was also eventually seen and as we headed back to the lodge for lunch an amazing Great Potoo was pointed out to us roosting on a dead stump high up in a tree. After lunch, we took the canoe and drifted along another creek. Two species of kingfishers were seen, the largest Ringed Kingfisher and the smallest American Pygmy Kingfisher, what a comparison! Also in the trees along the creek were White-chinned Jacamar, Collared Trogon, Lemon-throated Barbet, Russet-backed Oropendola and Slender-billed Kite. Eventually we arrived at the canopy tower which although we didn't have a reservation (very important as it can only take 10 persons) was unoccupied. The view from the top was simply amazing and the birds weren't bad either. Many-banded Aracari, Spangled Cotinga, Black-faced Dacnis, Black-headed Parrot, Crested Oropendola, Black Caracara, White-throated Toucan, Lawrence's Thrush and Dwarf Tyrant-manakin were all seen and whetted our appetite for tomorrow's visit. Also seen were White-lined Sac-winged Bats roosting in the buttressed trunk, Northern Amazon Red Squirrel and Red Howler monkey. Returning to the lodge as dusk was gathering Boat-billed Flycatcher and the amazing Hoatzin were seen together with something less welcome, a White Cayman!

Day 9: Left the lodge at 05.15 in the dark to walk to the canopy tower, searching for owls en-route, but without success. We climbed the tower in the darkness and watched the sun rise over unbroken rainforest, a truly memorable experience. The tower canopy is built in the largest tree for miles around and is about two hundred feet high. This is a big advantage as you can see canopy dwelling birds as well as raptors, which are nearly impossible from the ground. As soon as the light became good enough, we started to see many new birds in the trees including Golden-bellied & Rufous-bellied Euphonias, Opal-crowned & Turquoise Tanagers, Black-tailed Tityra, Lineated & Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers, Cobalt-winged & Dusky-headed Parakeet, Ruddy Pigeon, White-browed Purple-tuft, Slender-footed Tyrannulet, White-necked Jacobin, Bare-necked Fruitcrow and Douggan's Antwren. Meanwhile, overhead, raptors included Double-toothed Kite, Black-faced & Crane Hawks and Greater Yellow-headed Vulture whilst high above were Short-tailed Swifts and Fork-tailed Palm-swifts. In the middle of all this activity, a trainee guide brought us breakfast, carrying hot food and coffee and cold drinks for two miles then climbing the tower with it on his head! By 11.00 bird activity had significantly decreased so we leisurely strolled back to the lodge arriving back at 12.15.

After lunch we took the pirogue back across the lagoon to the boardwalk where the Tawny-bellied Screech-owl was still in residence and a pair of White-shouldered Antbirds were coaxed out of the dense vegetation. Continuing on to the River Napo we worked an area of open grassland with scattered trees. This different habitat added new species to our lists including Sand Martin, Cattle Egret, Eastern Wood & Tropical Pewees, Grey-capped & Social Flycatchers, Brown Jacamar, Magpie & Silver-beaked Tanagers, Red-breasted Blackbird, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Southern Lapwing, Spotted Sandpiper, Mottled-backed Elaenia, Giant Cowbird and Plum-throated Cotinga. Several Undulated Tinamous were flushed from the grass but flew into the adjacent forest. The walk was also noted for seeing monkeys with Saddleback Tamarin, Common Squirrel Monkey, White-fronted Capuchin Monkey and Dusky Titi Monkey all seen. Returning to the lodge, Red-capped cardinal was seen from the boat and as we had drinks prior to dinner, an Orange-breasted Falcon flew over in the gathering dusk. At dinner one of the other guides told Oscar that he had found a roosting Great Tinamou. Armed with torches therefore, we went about half a mile on one of the trails and there it was, a large chicken like bird roosting on a branch only a few feet away.

Day 10: After the usual early breakfast, we left at 06.00, crossing the lagoon and walking along the boardwalk where a Grey-necked Wood-rail obliged. We had to keep going however, and eventually reached our large motorised pirogue in which we headed down river for about half an hour seeing Osprey, Yellow-headed Caracara and Striated heron en-route. The main purpose of this boat rip however, was to visit a parrot clay lick and we were not disappointed. On arrival hundreds of Mealy, Blue-headed & Yellow-headed Parrots were busy eating the clay on the river bank. The clay contains an agent that neutralising the poison in some of the seeds and fruits that they eat, it was a truly memorable sight. Retracing our steps, Oscar found an amazingly confiding Grey Potoo on a riverside branch (see picture above). Drab Water-tyrants were not quite so spectacular but nevertheless new and a number of Greater Anis were seen. Next, we landed on an island in the river. This is a specialised habitat for several species and during the course of an hour we managed to record Black-capped Donacobius, Lesser Wagtail-tyrant, Lesser Seedfinch, Oriole Blackbird, Short-crested Flycatcher, Orange-headed Tanager, Castelnuovo's Antshrike, Pale-vented Pigeon and Least Bittern, unfortunately we could not find Ladder-tailed Nightjars however. Some of the bank was starting to collapse as we reboarded the pirogue so we had to make a hasty departure. The river is however, a very dynamic system, frequently changing its deepwater course and making or reclaiming islands. Continuing our journey back to the lodge, Oscar spotted a male Ladder-tailed Nightjar perched on a riverside branch so we thankfully got that one back. Oscar then checked out an occasional roost site for Tropical Screech-owl but it couldn't be found. We moored the motorised pirogue and walked back along another trail for a couple of hours. In fact, we spent most of our time in a couple of spots looking for several difficult species. A White-eared Jacamar eventually showed well but an Orange-backed Troupial despite singing from one spot constantly took a long time to locate. Finally, we found another ace skulker, a Plumbeous Antbird before getting into the small pirogue and crossing the lagoon back to the lodge for lunch. The law of diminishing returns were starting to apply now and although we were seeing lots of birds, it was becoming progressively more difficult to see new ones. Nevertheless, an afternoon pirogue trip up the other creek followed by a walk yielded Rufous-tailed Flatbill, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Snail Kite, Cinnamon Attila and Green-and-rufous Kingfisher with a bit of effort. Once again we found the Crested Owls but I didn't have my camera with me! Returning to the lodge at dusk again, a juvenile Rufescent Tiger-heron was flushed by the boat.

Day 11: Sadly, we had to leave today after breakfast at 06.00. As we paddled across the lagoon another Rufescent Tiger-heron was seen together with a superb Masked Crimson Tanager. Some time was spent around the landing stage where we coaxed into view both Silvered and Warbling Antbirds. Further down the boardwalk Black-tailed Trogon, Spot-breasted Woodpecker and Yellow-breasted Flycatcher were all seen, a nice end to our stay at Sacha Lodge. We started the return Pirogue journey to Coca at 08.00 seeing similar species to the outward journey including the Sand-coloured Nighthawks. The return journey was against the current so it took 3 hours but we were in plenty of time for our return flight to Quito at 12.00. The return flight took slightly longer because of the erupting volcano but we arrived at Quito at 13.00 and were back in our hotel at 14.00. We spent the afternoon at leisure eating, resting and shopping as we had to be up early the next day again

Day 12: Tony and a new driver met us at 06.00 for a drive up into the Paramo. The views were simply stunning, with the Andes visible stretching as far as the eye could see including volcanoes Antisani & Cotipaxi. As we rose higher and higher the air became thinner until we got to Papallecta Pass at 4,064 metres. Here we stopped to look for some of the specialities of the Paramo and it didn't take us long to find Bar-winged & Stout-billed Cinclodes, Many-striped Canastero and White-chinned Thistletail. Next, we headed up a side-track to a communications station at about 4,325 metres. At this altitude walking up even a slight slope was quite tiring with frequent stops having to be taken. Unfortunately, all we could find were Plumbeous Sierra-finches with no sign of the Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe. Dropping back down to the pass therefore, we continued looking for the specialities and were able to find the Variable form of Puna Hawk as well as Red-backed Hawk, Carunculated Caracara, Brown-backed Chat-tyrant, Brown-bellied Swallow, Blue-mantled Thornbill and Andean Tit-spinetail. Further downslope and out of the Paramo, we worked an area of Elfin Forest but birds were conspicuous by their absence with only Red-crested Cotinga and Plain-coloured Seedeater seen. On a distant lake however, we were able to pick out Andean Duck and Silvery Grebe. Further downslope, we stopped to eat our packed lunches closely watched by a Black-chested Buzzard-eagle. After lunch we continued down to a reservoir and found a Viridian Metaltail feeding on flowers next to the vehicle. There were a few ducks on the reservoir and as we walked closer we were able to identify them as Yellow-billed Pintail and Speckled Teal. Moving down to the village Thermas de Papallecta, we checked into the hotel, a delightful building with its own thermal pools scattered around the gardens. Exploring a nearby area of bushes next to the thermal swimming pool complex, we found a number of new species including Rufous-breasted Chat-tyrant, Black Flower-piercer, Hooded Siskin, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, White-banded & White-throated Tyrannulets, Spectacled Whitestart, Pale-naped Brush-finch and Shining Sunbeam. The most impressive two birds

however, were a spectacular Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanager which conveniently landed on a bush right beside us and an even more spectacular Sword-billed Hummingbird which performed in front of us feeding on tubular flowers for at least ten minutes. This must surely be one of the most highly adapted birds in the world. We returned to the hotel for an excellent dinner followed by a warm soak in the outside pools watching the stars.

Day 13: The sun rose into a cloudless sky and the scenery was simply stunning with Antisani rising majestically above the rest of the Andes. We worked the bushy slope again but only added a few new birds, Tyrian Metaltail, Tourmaline Sunangel, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Capped Conebill, Saffron-crowned Tanager and Long-tailed Sylph. After breakfast we set off down the valley making as much progress as we could towards different habitat. A few stops were made at suitable sites for White-capped Dipper and eventually we were rewarded. Driving past the entrance to San Isidro we visited a ridge with an excellent birding track along it. Unfortunately, there was low cloud so we aborted the walk. Retracing our steps we found three new species, Mountain Cacique, Emerald Toucanet and the Inca form of Green Jay. The drive up the track to San Isidro was bumpy but not the worse we had experienced and we were soon enjoying the hospitality of Mitch Lysinger and his wife at the lodge. They have a comfortable array of cabins here with excellent food served in their main house. With plenty of daylight left, we worked the road outside the lodge. Birding was excellent with Bluish Flower-piercer, Blue-and-black & Grass-green Tanagers, Bronze-olive Pygmy-tyrant, Rufous Spinetail and Black-capped & Black-eared Hemispingus all seen. Once again however, it was the skulkers which we had to work hard for and were rewarded with good views of, Slate-crowned Antpitta and Long-tailed Antbird. Dinner was excellent and we all had a good night's sleep at this welcoming lodge.

Day 14: We made an early start, walking into the nearby forest at first light. Plenty of birds were calling but we were not to be swayed from our mission. Eventually we made it to purpose built shelter where we soon managed to locate a male Andean Cock-of-the-rock. A female was also seen before we retraced our steps. New birds were hard to find however, with only Rufous Wren being added to the list. We returned to the lodge for breakfast then worked the road again finding Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Olive-backed & Tyrannine Woodcreepers, Smoky Bush-tyrant, Rufous-crowned Tody-tyrant, Flame-faced Tanager, Pearled Treerunner and Common Bush-tanager. We had a splendid lunch at the lodge whilst watching hummingbirds including Bronzy Inca before packing our cases into the van and saying our farewells. As we left, we added two more raptors to our lists, Broad-winged Hawk and Black-and-chestnut Eagle as well as Subtropical Caciques. On the return journey we continued to check various spots along the river and were eventually rewarded with a female Torrent Duck. Another White-capped Dipper was seen followed by a splendid male Torrent Duck. Leaving the valley behind we started to climb up Papallecta Pass again and once again drove up to the communications station. This time we were rewarded with excellent views of a pair of Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, it was certainly worth the effort! Returning down the track we also managed to locate a Tawny Antpitta. Unfortunately, we had not managed to find an Andean Condor but we had done very well in the Paramo. As we headed back down towards Quito an owl flew across the road. After a brief search, we found the bird perched on a fence post, it was a Short-eared Owl, a new bird for Tony! We arrived in Quito after dark and settled into our hotel again with a tour total of 488 species in 13 days of birding.

Day 15: With an afternoon flight, those not on the extension had a morning free to relax before being collected from the hotel by Tony and taken to the airport for the return flight to London.

Day 16: Arrival in London at the end of the tour.