

Amazon to Andes and Western Slope with Leif Gabrielsen 17 Oct-8 Nov 2009

Charlie guided a keen Norwegian birder for 3 weeks with a total of 722 species recorded, with some 55 heard only. Paula Reynosa joined us on the east slope. At Bellavista a pair of Tanager Finches came in finally on the second morning for a lingering visit. Soon after we saw a Plain-breasted Hawk bathing in a puddle on the research station road. White-throated Quail-Dove has become semi-regular visitor now on the compost heap near the lodge.



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Another attraction is the morning crop of moths lured by the lights which bring in a clan of extremely tame Turquoise Jay, Toucan Barbet, Masked Trogon, Tricolored and White-winged Brush-Finch 2, Russet-crowned Warbler. A Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush 1, which is normally very difficult to glimpse, was gleaning moths off the path to the dome!

Paz de las Aves put on a lucky great show of Giant, Yellow-breasted 4 and Moustached Antpitta 5.



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In addition, Olivaceous Piha 3, another spooky uncommon and local species has been befriended by Angel and Rodrigo Paz and came within reaching distance to the grapes near the blind! The fruit feeders new this past year are a bonus for closeup views of Sickie-winged Guans, Toucan Barbet, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Pale-mandibled Araçari, Blue-winged and Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager. In the midday sun which was baking most of the W slope we found refuge in the clouds of the Mashpi Reserve and were not disappointed. Here we had great looks of 6

individuals in different flocks of both Moss-backed Tanager and Glistening-green Tanagers. A surprise altitude record and lifer for Charlie of the Broad-billed Sapayoa at 1425m, normally found below 500m. Also the new sensation, Indigo Flowerpiercer plus Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Pacific Tuftedcheek, Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Sepia-brown Wren and Rufous-throated Tanager.

Noisy clans of Ochre-breasted Tanagers accompanied us along the upper Waterfall Road above Mindo. Also great views of Golden-headed Quetzal, Smoky-brown Woodpecker as well as Rufous-winged Tyrannulet. Afternoon on Milpe Road we saw Rufous-rumped Antwren, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, White-throated Spadebill, Tawny-breasted and Flavescent Flycatcher.

Cool overcast weather at Rio Palenque was great for bird activity and we managed to see Ochraceous Attila just in the forest on the river road even though it wasn't singing. Ochre-bellied Flycatcher came in for good view after playback along with Gray-and Gold Warbler, Pallid Dove, Chocó Woodpecker, Western Slaty-Antshrike, Chestnut-backed Antbird.

A great morning at Silanche Reserve started with Checker-throated Antwren, White-whiskered Puffbird; great looks, photos and recordings were made of the scarce and local [Scaly-throated Leafhopper](#), the inconspicuous [Western Woodhaunter](#) 6 and Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher. The tower was pumping with birds at 9:30am with flocks of Purple & Green Honeycreeper, Emerald, Blue-necked, White-shouldered, Tawny-crowned & Bay-headed tanagers. Also around were Cinnamon, Guayaquil & Golden-olive Woodpecker, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Black-striped Woodcreeper, Dusky Pigeon, Chocó Toucan, Dusky-capped, Slaty-capped & Streaked Flycatcher, Orange-fronted & Red-headed Barbet, Pale-mandibled Araçari, Swallow-tailed & Plumbeous Kite, Maroon-tailed Parakeet, Squirrel Cuckoo, Black-and-white & One-colored Becard,



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With Paula onboard, her karma brought us fantastic weather over Papallacta pass rewarding us with easy and copious views of many skulkers which were teed-up on shrub tops including Tawny Antpitta, Many-striped Canastero 7, Andean Tit-spinetail and White-chinned Thistletail. We tripped over Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe 8 with an adult and young shuffling in the sand near the antenna summit and I was able to record [a flight call](#). The elusive Masked Mountain-Tanager 9

appeared with 3 individuals moving and foraging low in the elfin forest. A quick squirt of their song from my iPod brought them up so Leif could snap a great shot.



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Other notable species above the hot springs included Stripe-headed Brush-Finch, Purple-backed Thornbill, Viridian Metaltail, Agile Tit-tyrant along with flocks of Scarlet-bellied, Lacrimose and Black-chested Mountain-Tanager. We tried for Crescent-faced Antpitta at a new stakeout but only heard it. At Guango we observed Slaty Brush-Finch, Black-chested Fruiteater and Chestnut-crowned Antpitta came out beautifully for feeding time in the afternoon. Neotropic Cormorant looked out of place at Papallacta but this species has been invading higher altitudes recently.

Guacamayos ridge gave us a cracking view of Andean Potoo **10** on a day roost as well as Powerful Woodpecker. Several Dusky Piha were very active and Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant, otherwise activity was low but we heard Barred Antthrush, Slate-crowned Antpitta and the unnamed eastern race of Blackish Tapaculo.



Outside of Archidona we had White-lored Euphonia, Paradise and Yellow-bellied Tanager, Orange-fronted Plushcrown, Straight-billed Woodcreeper 11, Mottle-backed Elaenia, the lingering austral migrant Crowned Slaty Flycatcher. El Para yielded Fasciated and White-shouldered Antshrike but Striated Antbird and Large-headed Flatbill were heard only.

Wildsumaco gave us great weather and birds. Of the dozens of times I have visited it was the first time I saw Antisana Volcano in the clear. The hummingbird feeders were less active but with persistence we saw Ecuadorian Piedtail, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Gould's Jewelfront, Napo Sabrewing, Rufous-vented Whitetip, White-tipped Sicklebill, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Violet-headed Humingbird as well as Gorgeted Woodstar and Wire-crested Thorntail on the Verbena hedge. Near the residence house I glimpsed a Fiery-throated Fruiteater and in the late afternoon a Tiny Hawk roosted for the night above the trail. A skein of 20 Military Macaws traced the sky and settled in fruiting tree for some lingering looks. At dusk with a full moon we seduced a Band-bellied Owl 12 which managed swoop in low below the horizon. Only with luck I noticed a small snag waving and spotted the perched beauty. Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Rufescent and Foothill Screech-Owl were heard but didn't reveal themselves.



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On the Piha trail a Short-tailed Antthrush paraded by, Yellow-throated Spadebill came in beautifully and Leif had a glimpse of Gray-tailed Piha. Lined Antshrike, Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo, Foothill Antwren, Rufous-rumped and Ornate Antwren were seen nicely in flocks as well as Plain-winged Antwren (only the second time I have seen this). On the F.A.C.E. trail we had great looks at Chestnut-crowned Gnateater, Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, White-crowned Manakin and Blue-rumped Manakin 13 ([listen to its call I recorded](#)). Leif managed a silhouette view of a vocalizing Buff-throated Tody-Tyrant in the canopy after playback. A late morning flock in a ravine on the Streamcreeper trail gave us eye-level views of Ecuadorian Tyrannulet, Cerulean

Warbler, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Olivaceous Greenlet, Gray-mantled Wren, Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager and Orange-eared Tanager on a nest. Short-crested Flycatcher plus the obscure and overlooked Red-billed Tyrannulet came in predictably to playback up the road near Pacto.

After much effort and chasing the calls around the residence house we finally located and observed a different pair of Coppery-chested Jacamar down the road before we had to pack up and head to Coca. A riverside stop before Coca was birdy with Chestnut-eared Araçari, Many-banded Araçari, Yellow-rumped and Solitary Cacique, Great Kiskadee, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Greater Yellow-headed Vulture, Scaled Pigeon, Plain-breasted Ground-Dove, Black-billed Seed-Finch and Orange-backed Troupial.

Late afternoon in Coca cooking in the sun and dust we found a new secondary side road across the river for White-cheeked Jacamar, Cream-colored Woodpecker, Cinnamon-throated Woodcreeper, Bare-necked Fruitcrow, Black-crowned Tityra. Sani Lodge provided some exceptional species including Agami Heron, Rufous Potoo 14, Olive-spotted Hummingbird, Parker's Spinetail, Castelnau's Antshrike, Black-and-white Antbird, Pink-throated Becard, the very rare and local Orange-crested Manakin 15 and Caquetá Seedeater.



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Back into the paramo at Antisana we had delightful weather with the wind blowing the opposite direction than all the other trips I have been on. It was blowing all the clouds and drizzle back to amazonia and the lakeshore was very calm with Stout-billed Cinclodes 16 Silvery Grebe and Andean Teal closeby. Streak-backed Canastero and Many-striped Canastero showed nicely as well as Paramo Pipit, Black-faced Ibis, and Andean Gull. A pair of Aplomado Falcon sheared over our heads at the bridge curve in hot pursuit of an Eared Dove. A few minutes later the pair returned with the female clutching some breast meat. On the way out I luckily spotted a Cinereous Harrier in my sideview mirror and we hopped out to watch an immature rocking low over the paramo. Amazingly no Andean Condor was seen today. Cotopaxi gave us similar weather and we were able to flush both an Ecuadorian Rail and Noble Snipe at Limpiopungo lake marsh. Near the refuge

parking finally an immature Andean Condor slid past and we had great luck below flushing an Andean Snipe. Later we worked long and hard in the afternoon heat and Leif finally snagged the Scrub Tanager 17 near Tumbaco.



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A last morning visit to Yanacocha yielded Green-tailed Trainbearer in a patch of Brachyotum and a bold Rufous Antpitta came out to playback. Bar-bellied Woodpecker, Smoky-bush Tyrant and Puna Hawk stooping on a Curve-billed Tinamou which flushed beautifully were the impressive cadenza to this wonderfully productive and memorable birding trip.