



ECUADOR, FEBRUARY 2017

Report by Sophie and Manuel

We went to Ecuador for 3 weeks and covered the clouded forest, the Andes and the Amazon rain forest. It was very different regarding mammal watching in comparison to our previous travels. We obviously hiked a lot but still did as many night drives as possible but we decided to try new things since it was not possible to drive in the Amazon. We decided therefore to take our hide with us as well as our camera trap. The camera trap was out on almost every day and night. We didn't know how to proceed best during the night but the quiet night walk was the strategy that worked best for us. We also tried staying in the hide with a not that bright warm light near to us but we think animals would probably avoid a new light in the forest. After talking with Michael Kessler, we think that it might be a good idea to have a red light nearby. Scanning with the thermal camera and spotlighting if there is an animal was also an idea, but in the end, it's probably not a good idea to surprise an animal like this.

- 1) Hide: We didn't spot any animal from the hide.
- 2) Camera trap: Our camera trap photographed an oncilla and two unidentified mice in 20 days. This could mean that although there is a great variety of animals in the places we stayed, there might not be a big density of them.
- 3) Night drives: Quiet successful in the Andes, where we spotted at least one mammal a night. Less successful in the clouded forest where we didn't have mammal sightings besides the two oncillas.
- 4) Conclusion: We saw the majority of the mammals while hiking this trip was therefore hard work but very healthy for us 😊

Itinerary:

Day 1 to 5: Stay in Bellavista
Day 5: Drive from Bellavista to Papallacta
Days 5 to 10: Stay in Papallacta
Day 10: Drive from Papallacta to Wildsumaco
Days 10 to 13: Stay in Wildsumaco
Day 13: Drive from Wildsumaco to Shiripuno
Day 13 to 17: Stay in Shiripuno
Day 17: Drive from Shiripuno to Mindo
Days 17 to 20: Stay in Mindo (Yellow House)



BELLAVISTA

Bellavista is a clouded forest nearby Quito, very famous for its birds of course but also for the discovery of the latest mammal species the olinguito. It is held by Richard and Gloria Parsons which bought 700ha for nature conservation. They have hummingbird feeders and a banana station for mammals. They put them up the trees at 7pm so that a) the tayras won't eat them all b) the people can be called during diner time. Usually the white-eared opossum, the kinkajou and olinguito come to eat 7-8.30pm. If there are leftovers the next morning, either red-tailed squirrels or tayras will come and eat them.

Our sightings (4 days / 5 nights):

- **Kinkajou:** Seen on every evening we looked at the banana station.
- **Oncilla:** Seen on two night drives next to the road. Our camera trap also photographed one. Both sightings and the photo were at around 04.30-05.30am.
- **Red-tailed squirrel:** Seen every day near the lodge.
- Unidentified **mouse:** Small and brown. We promise: We will try to expand our mouse knowledge for our next trip 😊
- **White-eared opossum:** Seen one evening at the banana station.
- **Olinguito:** Seen twice at the banana station.
- **Tayra:** Seen once early morning at the banana station. Seen once more on a trail late afternoon.

Tracks:

- **Spectacled bear:** We have seen fresh tracks early morning on a trail.
- **Ocelot:** Seen tracks from the night before at the lodge!



PAPALLACTA

We went to Papallacta like other to have the chance to spot the spectacled bear and the mountain tapir. We went with Armando Castellanos (iznachi@gmail.com) and his eagle-eyed/iron-man assistant Melcior (still not sure if I got the name right). Armando finances his projects with his tourist program. He is very flexible and tries to realize their wishes. With this money he pays for the cattle killed by bears so that the locals won't kill them. He also has a rescue centre where he really reintroduces the bears back to nature. Finally to finance his research of course.

We were really happy to be out and about with him because he wasn't "super extra tourist careful" and we could follow our goal without any boundaries.

The only negative point of this trip was the hotel Coturpa. Not that it was bad (even though we had water troubles but this was apparently exceptional) but we think it's not very much mammal watcher adapted. The owners always had to open the main door themselves which meant that these poor people had to wake up at impossible hours for us. It was also very noisy during the day and it was difficult to fall asleep. Consider staying at the thermals even though it is much more expensive.

One last tip. Armando doesn't have his own car and therefore you either bring your own rented car or you go by taxi (which probably means no night safari). We used our rented car and realized that the next fuel station was almost at Quito Airport (over 40km away) and trust us, you use a lot of gas in the Andes. We would therefore really recommend to buy a canister.

Our sightings (4 days / 5 nights):

- **Tapeti:** Seen a lot either in the morning or in the evening.
- **White-tailed deer:** A couple of sightings early morning and late afternoon/night.
- **Spectacled bear:** Five sightings during the day.
- **Culpeo:** Two sightings. One early morning and one at night.
- **Mountain Tapir:** One sighting of a collared one.

Tracks:

- **Puma:** We have seen quite a lot of tracks around. They are around!



WILD SUMACO

Driven by the beautiful camera trap pictures and the fact that Margay is the most photographed cat there, we decided to stay at Wildsumaco on the way to the Amazon. When we arrived there, we were told that nobody had actually seen the Margay until now.

We were also apparently unlucky since it didn't rain the last two days and it has to rain quiet a lot for the mammals to move. It was also the period of full moon and we were told that this is also bad for nocturnal activity.

We quickly decided to hike to the area close to the volcano and the national park since there seems to be a bigger mammal density there. We had a pretty difficult time communicating with the local guide but we found out that a) the locals eat a lot of animals in the past and they retired to the volcano and national park b) the national park is 25km away and only reachable by foot. Walking for 6 hours only enabled us to do a little bit more than half of the way to the national park. The was quiet adventurous (and it didn't rain), our guide himself fell down three times. One of my rubber boots had a hole as well so walking through rivers and mud like this made the whole hike unforgettable but that's another story 😊. In 6 hours of quiet walking we had one kinkajou sighting but this seems to be unusual since the guide couldn't believe it.

In summary, if you want to go to Sumaco for mammals, the best chance seems to be the best chance but to get there you should probably plan several days with camping.

Our sightings (2 days / 3 nights):

- **Red-tailed squirrel:** One sighting on the trail during the day.
- **Kinkajou:** One sighting during the night.
- **Greater grison or Hog-nosed skunk:** At night while walking we had a small glimpse of an animal disappearing into the forest. I saw a grison while Manuel saw a skunk. The lodge guide told that he had never seen a skunk but the grison from time to time. Going through Jon's report we read that he saw a skunk nearby though.
- **Lowland paca:** One very quick sighting at night.
- Unidentified **mouse:** Again. We will acquire this knowledge. It was jumping off like a gerbil.
- **Brown-mantled tamarin:** One sighting in the morning at the banana station.



SHIRIPUNO

It seemed like the Amazon Rainforest was going to be a big challenge for us. No lodge we wrote to were answering our questions and it looked like you would be forced into a program or you would have to have a private guide. Also, night walks were either completely forbidden because “too dangerous” or very limited in area and time.

Thankfully, we organised our trip with Randy Vickers (vickers.randy@gmail.com) on the recommendation of Jason (thanks again!). Randy is a very good and very motivated guide and we can really recommend him for mammal watchers (and others). He will find a way for you to maximize your chances as much as possible. He also knows a couple of places in Ecuador which are apparently very good for mammals and wait to be discovered by watcher 😊

Since we were especially looking for cats, Randy suggested to stay at Shiripuno. It is far away from the many many Napo lodges and basically surrounded by the Yasuni National Park. That means that a lot of mammals might be shyer but you might have better chances for other more elusive animals that need big territories.

Our sightings (3 days / 4 nights):

- **Monk saki:** One very quick sighting from the boat in early afternoon.
- **Squirrel monkey:** Three sightings, all in late afternoon.
- **Brown woolly monkey:** Sightings every day during the day.
- **Silverly woolly monkey:** One sighting on an early morning walk.
- **Spix's night monkey:** One very quick sighting during a night boat trip on the Shiripuno river.
- **Lowland paca:** Again, one very quick sighting from the boat during a night boat trip.
- **Venezuelan red howler:** Two sightings from the mirador. One in the morning and one in the evening.
- **White-bellied spider monkey:** Two sightings (they are so fast!) in the morning. The second sighting was amazing since they were curious and stayed around for a while.
- **White-fronted capuchin:** One sighting in late afternoon.
- **Kinkajou:** Two sightings during night boat drives.
- **Lesser long-nosed bat:** One sighting very early morning.
- **Greater bulldog bat:** One sighting of them hunting again on a night boat trip.
- **Black agouti:** One very quick sighting on a morning walk.
- **Eastern Lowland Olingo:** One sighting on a night walk.

Tracks:

- **Jaguar:** We found one Jaguar track nearby the lodge.

MINDO








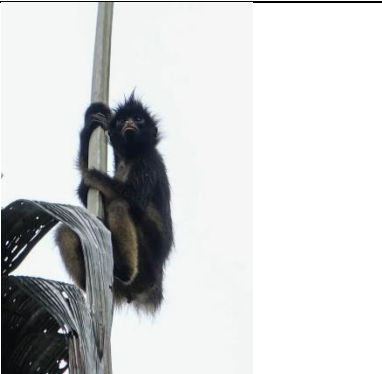
We kept our last days of the trip unplanned so we could spontaneously decide where we wanted to go next. We wanted to stay in the Amazon Rainforest but a) it was Sunday and b) it was election day and therefore, the only lodge who would take us, asked for 600\$ for the canoe ride to the lodge only. That's when we decided to go to Mindo.






We stayed in the lovely 'Yellow House' where it was possible to see all kinds of animals from the bear to the sloth.

Our sightings (2 days / 3 nights):





- **Central American agouti:** They are around the lodge everyday almost as if they were pets.
- **Unidentified monkey:** This monkey group still remains a mystery to us since people were never agreed on the species. The woman from the Yellow House said it they were a new species and one worker from the Yellow House said they were Mantled howlers. To us they clearly didn't look like howler and when asking other mammalers we heard white-headed, a white-fronted species or maybe even brown capuchin. Anyway: What do you think? (Picture on the next page)
- **Red-tailed squirrel:** One sighting on the trail.
- **Nine-banded armadillo:** One sighting at night around the lodge.

Mammals list:

<p>Brown-mantled tamarin</p>	<p><i>Saguinus fuscicollis</i></p>	<p>Only one sighting in the morning at the banana feeding station at Wildsumaco</p>	
<p>White-fronted capuchin</p>	<p><i>Cebus albifrons</i></p>	<p>One sighting late afternoon at Shiripuno.</p>	
<p>Unidentified monkey</p>	<p>We heard different things like mantled howler, white-headed capuchin, white-fronted capuchin or brown capuchin. Any idea?</p>	<p>One sighting in the clouded forest of Mindo.</p>	
<p>Common squirrel monkey</p>	<p><i>Saimiri sciureus</i></p>	<p>Three sightings in late afternoon at Shiripuno.</p>	
<p>Spix's night monkey</p>	<p><i>Aotus vociferans</i></p>	<p>One very quick sighting during a night boat trip on the Shiripuno river.</p>	
<p>Monk saki</p>	<p><i>Pithecia monachus</i></p>	<p>One very quick sighting from the boat on Shiripuno river in the afternoon.</p>	
<p>Venezuelan red howler</p>	<p><i>Alouatta seniculus</i></p>	<p>Two sightings from the mirador in Shiripuno.</p>	
<p>White-bellied spider monkey</p>	<p><i>Ateles belzebuth</i></p>	<p>Two sightings in the morning at Shiripuno</p>	

Brown woolly monkey	<i>Lagothrix lagotricha</i>	Sightings on every day at Shiripuno.	
Silvery woolly monkey	<i>Lagothrix poeppigii</i>	One sighting early morning at Shiripuno.	
Black agouti	<i>Dasyprocta fuliginosa</i>	One very quick sighting in the morning at Shiripuno.	
Central American agouti	<i>Dasyprocta punctata</i>	They walk around Yellow House like domestic animals.	
Lowland paca	<i>Cuniculus paca</i>	Two very quick sightings, both at night. One at Wildsumaco and one at Shiripuno.	
Tapeti	<i>Sylvilagus brasiliensis</i>	A lot of sightings in the Andes, either in early morning or late afternoon.	
Oncilla	<i>Leopardus tigrinus</i>	Two sightings and one photograph of the camera trap all on very early morning in Bellavista.	
Culpeo	<i>Lycalopex culpaeus</i>	Two sightings in the Andes. One early morning and one at night.	

<p>Spectacled bear</p>	<p><i>Tremarctos ornatus</i></p>	<p>Five sightings during the day in the Andes.</p>	
<p>Kinkajou</p>	<p><i>Potos flavus</i></p>	<p>Seen on almost every evening at the banana feeding station in Bellavista around diner time. We had one more sighting at night at Wildsumaco and two more also at night at Shiripuno.</p>	
<p>Eastern Lowland Olingo</p>	<p><i>Bassaricyon alleni</i></p>	<p>One sighting at night at Shiripuno.</p>	
<p>Olinguito</p>	<p><i>Bassaricyon neblina</i></p>	<p>Seen on almost every evening at the banana feeding station in Bellavista around diner time.</p>	
<p>Tayra</p>	<p><i>Eira barbara</i></p>	<p>One sighting early morning at the banana feeding station in Bellavista and another during late afternoon in the forest of Bellavista.</p>	
<p>Greater grison or Striped hog-nosed skunk</p>	<p><i>Galictis vittata or Conepatus semistriatus</i></p>	<p>Still not sure which one we have spotted. It was very quick in the night at Wildsumaco. Manuel saw a skunk and I saw a grison. According to the lodge it should be the grison but we read that Jon spotted a skunk nearby.</p>	

Mountain tapir	<i>Tapirus pinchaque</i>	One sighting of a collared one in the afternoon in the Andes.	
White-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	A couple of sightings in the Andes during early morning and late afternoon/night.	
White-eared opossum	<i>Didelphis albiventris</i>	One sighting at the banana feeding station of Bellavista during diner time.	
Red-tailed Squirrel	<i>Sciurus granatensis</i>	Seen every day around the lodge in Bellavista. One sighting at Wildsumaco and Mindo as well.	
Lesser long-nosed bat	<i>Leptonycteris yerbabuena</i>	One sighting very early morning at Shiripuno.	
Greater bulldog bat	<i>Noctilio leporinus</i>	One sighting during a night boat drive on the Shiripuno river.	