

Ecuador Trip Report

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Giant Armadillo (*Priodontes maximus*)

I traveled to Ecuador in December 2019 with David and Arlene Karesh, where we spent four nights at Cabanas San Isidro and ten nights at Tiputini Biodiversity Station. As on my previous trips, I concentrated on night walks and didn't see much of the diurnal fauna. My photos are on <https://www.tremarcos.com> and are cross-posted at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tremarcos>. I also post my observations to iNaturalist.

Cabanas San Isidro is situated in beautiful cloud forest on the eastern slope of the Andes, at about 2000 meters. The relatively flat terrain and well-maintained trail system make it better for finding mammals on night walks than other cloud forest locations I have visited. Activity was slow, but I managed to see my two most-wanted species. Amazingly, the very first mammal I saw here was an *Oncilla*! It was sitting in the trail about ten minutes from the lodge along the Tapir Trail. Frustratingly, I hadn't prepared my camera settings and my photos were blurry. Other sightings included a distant Mountain Tapir from the terrace of the dining room, Lemurine Night Monkey, and the amazing Guacamayo Climbing Toad on the nearby Guacamayos Ridge Trail.



Water Opossum (*Chironectes minimus*)

I've long wanted to visit Tiputini Biodiversity Station. It took me a while to find the right person to contact, and then to find a long enough time period when there was availability to be worth the trip. The forest was amazing and I had wonderful encounters with some of my most-wanted species. However, in my opinion, I preferred the overall experience at Shiripuno Lodge due to the trail system (the trails afford more visibility, and there are several long trails where you can be dropped off by boat and walk back along) and the fact that they cater to tourists rather than researchers (Tiputini only offered meals at set times, was hard to book, and there was some ambiguity about being able to walk unguided). Moreover, while the forest at Tiputini was beautiful and pristine the constant rumble from distant oil drilling operations took away from the experience.

That said, I had some incredible observations at Tiputini. Giant Armadillo has been on my most-wanted list for years. I saw one on my first international wildlife trip to Peru in 2010 (at Explorer's Inn), but I only had poor views of one walking quickly away from me. I've had a couple close misses since then in Manu and at Shiripuno. On my fourth night at Tiputini, I walked a loop combining the Harpia and Mata-mata trails, which was perhaps my favorite route at the station. At the intersection of the trails, I stopped for a drink of water. As I brought my water bottle to my mouth, I heard a large mammal approaching through the undergrowth. I slowly placed my bottle on the ground. A few seconds later, the Giant Armadillo emerged from the undergrowth right in front of me, too close for photos! I guessed it would soon cross the Mata-mata trail, and it ambled into the open a few minutes later. That's when I snapped the photo shown above. I listened to the beast move through the undergrowth for fifteen minutes or so until it entered the trail a final time, even closer than before. Until then, the Armadillo hadn't seemed to have noticed me or at least to have minded me, but this time it stopped in the open and paused nervously for 30 seconds, eyeing me (or, rather, sniffing me I suppose). Suddenly, it rushed off the trail and crashed through the undergrowth. The Giant Armadillo is a truly amazing creature, appearing as if it were a relic of the pleistocene megafauna.



Oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*)

Other highlights at Tiputini included Water Opossum in a small quebrada along the Harpia Trail, two Brazilian Tapirs at a clay lick (bringing me to three Tapir species for 2019), the rare and beautiful glass frog *Cochranella resplendens* (at the same time and place as the Water Opossum), and the weird cavity-breeding frog *Nyctimantis rugiceps*.

1 Species Lists

I've included lists of mammals, reptiles and amphibians observed below. Sightings due only to David and/or Arlene alone are marked with a *.

1.1 Mammals

1.1.1 Tiputini

1. Red Brocket (*Mazama zamora*) - seen a couple times.
2. Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*) - seen in the morning.
3. White-lipped Peccary (*Tayassu pecari*) - a group heard near the station on the first day.
4. Kinkajou (*Potos flavus*) - not very vocal this trip, but still detected most nights.
5. Tucuxi (*Sotalia fluviatilis*) - one seen on the boat trip to the station.
6. Proboscis Bat (*Rhynchonycteris naso*)
7. Two-lined Sac-winged bat (*Saccopteryx bilineata*)



Neotropical Snail-eater (*Dipsas indica*)

8. Giant Armadillo (*Priodontes maximus*) - excellent views of one. See above.
9. Nine-banded Armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) - common, with up to four seen in one night.
10. Water Opossum (*Chironectes minimus*)- strangely, the only opossum seen at Tiputini.
11. Brazilian Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) - two seen at a clay lick.
12. Linneaus's Two-toed Sloth (*Choloepus didactylus*) - one seen on a boat ride in the evening.
13. Southern Tamandua (*Tamandua tetradactyla*) - two seen on the trails.
14. Spix's Night Monkey (*Aotus vociferans*) - common. Often seen near the station.
15. Red Howler Monkey (*Alouatta seniculus*)
16. Silvery Woolly Monkey (*Lagothrix poeppigii*) - common.
17. Pygmy Marmoset (*Cebuella pygmaea*) - a pair seen on a large tree across the river from the station.
18. Golden-mantled Tamarin (*Saguinus tripartitus*) - common.
19. Humboldt's squirrel monkey (*Saimiri cassiquiarensis*)
20. Napo Saki (*Pithecia napensis*) - one group seen near the lodge clearing.
21. White-tailed Titi (*Plecturocebus discolor*) - commonly heard, seen at the Marmoset site.
22. Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) - seen on the boat to the station.



Brown-eyed Treefrog (*Nyctimantis rugiceps*)

23. *Oecemys* sp
24. *Echimyidae* sp - maybe a *Makalata*
25. *Proechimys* sp - a few sightings. Significantly rarer here than in Madre de Dios. A researcher at the station noted that the population had dropped dramatically in recent years.
26. Paca (*Cuniculus paca*) - seen most nights
27. Brazilian Porcupine (*Coendou prehensilis*)* - seen by my friends Arlene and David next to the kitchen while I was walking in the forest.

1.1.2 Cabanas San Isidro

1. Oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*) - see above
2. Kinkajou (*Potus flavus*) - common and much more confiding (and fluffier) here than in the lowlands.
3. Black Agouti (*Dasyprocta fuliginosa*) - well-fed individuals are a constant presence in the lodge clearing during the daytime.
4. Brazilian Rabbit (*Sylvilagus brasiliensis*) - in the lodge clearing at night.
5. Mountain Tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*) - seen distantly from the terrace at the dining area.
6. Lemurine Night Monkey (*Aotus lemurinus*) - one seen along the road. A couple others heard distantly. Usually a pair are seen in the evening around the lodge, but I did not detect them.



Tiger-striped Leaf Frog (*Callimedusa tomopterna*)

7. Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*)

1.2 Reptiles

1. Amazon Green Anole (*Anolis punctatus*) - canopy tower
2. Amazon Bark Anole (*Anolis ortonii*)
3. Common Forest Anole (*Anolis trachyderma*)
4. Yellow-tongued Anole (*Anolis scypheus*)
5. Brown-eared Anole (*Anolis fuscoauratus*) - the most common anole
6. O'Shaughnessy's Gecko (*Gonatodes concinnatus*)
7. Southern Turnip-Tailed Gecko (*Thecadactylus solimoensis*)
8. *Cercosaura* sp
9. Harlequin Racerunner (*Plica umbra*)
10. Collared Treerunner (*Plica plica*)
11. Big Ground Snake (*Atractus major*) - three observations!
12. Banded Cat-eyed Snake (*Leptodeira annulata*)
13. Striped Sharpnose Snake (*Xenoxybelis argentea*)
14. South American Sipo (*Chironius multiventris*)
15. Common Blunt-headed Tree Snake (*Imantodes cenchoa*) - many seen, including one from the canopy tower
16. Amazon Basin Tree Snake (*Imantodes lentiferus*)



Slug Moth Caterpillar (*Minacraga* sp)

17. Neotropical Snail Eater (*Dipsas indica*)
18. Catesby's Snail Eater (*Dipsas catesbyi*)
19. Amazon Tree Boa (*Corallus hortulana*)
20. Yellow-spotted River Turtle (*Podocnemis unifilis*)
21. Schneider's Dwarf Caiman (*Paleosuchus trigonatus*)
22. White Caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*)

1.3 Amphibians

1. Spotted-Thighed Poison Frog (*Allobates femoralis*)
2. Spotted Toad (*Rhaebo guttatus*)
3. South American Common Toad (*Rhinella margaritifera* complex)
4. Cane Toad (*Rhinella marina*)
5. Resplendent Cochran Frog (*Cochranella resplendens*) - a mating pair seen high above a creek, at the same time as a Water Opossum!
6. *Teratohyla midas*
7. Ecuador Poison Frog (*Ameerega bilinguis*)
8. Alfaro's Tree Frog (*Boana alfaroi*)
9. Convict Tree Frog (*Boana calcarata*)
10. *Boana ventrimaculata* - split from Map Tree Frog (*B. geographica*)



Velvet Worm (*Peripatidae* sp)

11. *Boana appendiculata* - split from Map Tree Frog (*B. geographica*)
12. Basin Tree Frog (*Boana lanciformis*)
13. Nymph Tree Frog (*Boana nympha*)
14. Fringed Leaf Frog (*Cruziohyla craspedopus*) - sadly, heard only
15. Upper Amazon Tree Frog (*Dendropsophus bifurcus*)
16. Brown-eyed Tree Frog (*Nyctimantis rugiceps*) - two seen, one at a tree cavity and one at eye level
17. Cannatella's Spiny-Backed Frog (*Osteocephalus cannatellai*) - several seen along the Harpia trail
18. Tan-faced Spiny-backed Frog (*Osteocephalus fuscifacies*)
19. Flat-headed Spiny-backed Frog (*Osteocephalus planiceps*)
20. Manaus Spiny-backed Frog *Osteocephalus taurinus*
21. Yasuni Spiny-backed Frog (*Osteocephalus yasuni*)
22. Barred Monkey Frog (*Callimedusa tomopterna*)
23. White-lined Leaf Frog (*Phyllomedusa vaillantii*)
24. Canelos Treefrog - *Tepuihyla tuberculosa* - heard only
25. *Trachycephalus cunauaru* - heard only
26. Painted Forest Toadlet (*Engystomops petersi*)
27. *Leptodactylus discodactylus*
28. Smoky Jungle Frog (*Leptodactylus pentadactylus*)

29. Loreto White-lipped Frog (*Leptodactylus rhodomystax*)
30. Amazon River Frog (*Rana palmipes*)
31. Common Big-headed Frog (*Oreobates quixensis*)
32. Yasuni Rain Frog (*Pristimantis aureolineatus*) - seen at the canopy tower, the type locality for this species.
33. *Pristimantis brevicrus*
34. Diadem Rain Frog (*Pristimantis diadematus*)
35. *Pristimantis enigmaticus* - I'm pretty sure I photographed both this one and *P. omeviridis* but not certain.
36. Jatun Sacha Rain Frog (*Pristimantis kichwarum*) - the most common *Pristimantis*
37. Metallic Robber Frog (*Pristimantis lanthanites*)
38. Luscombe's Rain Frog (*Pristimantis luscombei*)
39. Malkin's Rain Frog (*Pristimantis malkini*)
40. Marti's Rain Frog (*Pristimantis martiae*)
41. *Pristimantis omeviridis*
42. Variable Rain Frog (*Pristimantis variabilis*)
43. *Pristimantis* sp nov - I believe two of the species I photographed are undescribed.
44. Mushroom-tongued Salamander (*Bolitoglossa* sp) - a complex with many undescribed species