

MAINLAND ECUADOR

7th – 25th September 2022

Ben Balmford and Marina Altoè

This was our first major trip together in which Ben was keen to do some serious mammal-ing, while we were trying to ensure a good balance of wildlife-related and non-wildlife related activities. Given there are plenty of Ecuador reports on mammalwatching.com, and that in most places there are excellent guides, we've tried to make this report more about planning and logistics, while also highlighting some other nice places and activities in case you're planning a more well-rounded (less-sole-mammal-focussed) trip. We should also say a massive thanks to all those reports – they helped hugely in planning – and to Ian Thompson in particular, who even arranged a Zoom meeting with us to discuss our plans.

Drivers

Most of the time we self-drive on trips, however this time, on the back of most reports, we decided to hire a driver and car where needed. Having a car and driver wasn't that much more expensive: most of the time we paid ~\$150/day for a driver all-in, compared to \$100/day for a 2 wheel-drive car, not including fuel. It also helped with getting to/from Tiputini, as we couldn't find an easy way to leave a car in Coca.

First off, we contacted *Jose Gallardo* off the back of Jon's recommendation, and would likely have gone with him, but he seemed very keen to change our itinerary in ways that would be more driving; more importantly, *Mario* and *Patrizio Pillajo*, the guides we used in Papallacta refused to work with any driver owing to "previous issues". When we specifically asked about *Jose*, they said that they'd had problems with him. Given that we thought there was limited choice but to use *Mario* and *Patricio* (that said, see the Papallacta section as that was not true in hindsight), we decided against *Jose*. Instead, we followed the recommendations on TripAdvisor for how to source a driver: email a whole host of them with your specific needs (dates, journeys, number of people) and see what comes back.

We've included below a list of the drivers we contacted from the list on TripAdvisor, as well as the ones who were organised by hotels to provide transfers from particular places. Phone numbers are for WhatsApp. If we hired a driver from the list, we've given a review next to them too. Santiago Garzon highlighted in green because he's the one we'd most highly recommend.

Name	Contact details	Review (if we hired them at all)
Angel Rea	angelrea@yahoo.com	
Dennis	Dennistourguide@gmail.com	
Eddy Zea	eddyzeagua@yahoo.com	Cuenca to Puerto Lopez. The only driver we wouldn't recommend. A bit of an odd character, we were actually driven by his uncle as Eddy's car was apparently broken – though his uncle told us Eddy often books him work. Fine, but just somewhat unnerving.
Jaime Canencia	canenciajaime@gmail.com	
Jorge Manobanda	manobandajorge1@yahoo.com	
Justo Estevez	justoestevez@yahoo.ca	
Luis Gavilanes	tourgavilanes@gmail.com	

Pablo Prado	vianaturapablo@yahoo.com	
Ricardo	rikardovillalobos@yahoo.com.ar	
Santiago Garzon	ecuadorguides@gmail.com or +593 99 838 3881	3 days around Quito. Absolutely brilliant – a good and very safe driver who acted more like a guide. Was happy with early starts and keen on wildlife, plus excellent English, and happy to make phone calls for us to Spanish speakers. Cannot recommend him highly enough.
Victor Alban	vicalban@hotmail.com	
Jose Gallardo	gallardotours@hotmail.com	
German Sanchez	+593 98 301 7747	Coca to San Isidro to Papallacta. Very friendly, safe driver, easy to communicate with despite limited English. He suggested an extra stop to see hummingbird.
Jorge Villareal	+593 99 562 7173	Quito to Coca. Very friendly, easy to communicate with despite limited English. A safe driver.

Our recommendation: [Santiago Garzon](#)

We spent three days with Santiago overall, from when he picked us up in Papallacta, to when he dropped us off at Hacienda Los Mortinos. He drives a very spacious SUV-style 4x4 and would ensure his car was clean at the start of each day, despite us and our muddy boots. Santiago is fantastic, a very safe driver, and acted more like a guide or friend than simply a driver. He was happy with early (4am) starts, keen on wildlife (would come along on walks even when there was no driving needed), looked out for our safety whenever we were out on foot in a town, suggested nice and reasonably priced food options and even offered to take photos of us (e.g., at the Mindo Zip Line). His English is fantastic, to the point where we could have interesting conversations about Ecuador's history and politics, and joke around too, which is always nice on long drives. He was also happy to make phone calls for us to Spanish-speaking places, e.g., ensuring that our visit to Paz de las Aves went smoothly. If there was one driver we would pick again, it would be him.

Day-by-day account

07/09

We arrived mid-afternoon in Quito and got a taxi to *Casa Alquimia* (65/night, cash preferred). The hotel is in a well-situated stunning colonial house. Breakfast is excellent and it's served on the top floor with views of the city.

08/09

We made the most of our jet lag and had an early start with a trip to *Casa del Alabado*, a fantastic pre-Columbian art museum. We would highly recommend a visit and the guided tour especially for the demonstration of a fascinating indigenous musical instrument. We then joined a free walking tour which took us through the main landmarks of the city and included a few food-related stops (including *canelazo*, fruit and chocolate). In the afternoon, we met up with *Jorge Villareal* to drive to Coca. We arrived at Coca around 9.45pm. We stayed in *Hotel Heliconias* (£78/night) as it was recommended by Tiputini, but we would not recommend it as the hotel is rather disappointing and quite expensive.



09/09

After a disappointing breakfast, we left Hotel Heliconias as quickly as we could to start our journey to *Tiputini Biodiversity Station*.

Arranging a trip to the Amazon Forest

We picked the *Tiputini Biodiversity Station* for our trip to the Amazon Forest, as it's the most affordable option along the Napo River. It was easily the highlight of our whole trip; and we would both go back like a shot given the opportunity: the mammals are fantastic, the guides are extremely good (easily some of the very best that Ben has ever been out with), the accommodation is very comfortable, the climate extremely pleasant for tropical rainforest, and the area is utterly magical to spend time in. However, arranging the trip takes a bit of work.

Tiputini Biodiversity Station (TBS)

Contact: Carla Larrea on reservastbs@usfq.edu.ec

Price: \$120/person/night, for full board accommodation and all guiding, plus \$120pp for a return trip Coca-Tiputini.

Booking: Bookings are done via email. The difficulty is connecting with already scheduled trips to be able to share boat trips. When we visited, these were being conducted on Mondays and Fridays.

Getting there: The boat rides officially leave Coca at 9.30 AM, that is before the morning plane from Quito lands. For this reason, it's advised you spend the night before near Coca. However, we would recommend that, rather than staying in Coca, you instead see if you can stay in *Wild Sumaco* the night before and leave early the next morning. You can set off by 6am and still make the boat at 9.30.

Activities: When we arrived, there was a suggested programme of activities that would've suited most tourists (e.g., river swimming). However, Ben wanted to maximise time in the forest, so our tip is to try and arrange activities with the guide direct, rather than with the station manager. Just to note, you're now only allowed out with a guide – which is broadly great because they're fantastic – but it does mean that very long night walks may be difficult (read: impossible) to arrange. We weren't really offered a night walk and didn't push for one as we were after a more relaxed experience, but I suspect that if we'd asked the guides directly, they'd have been more than happy to oblige.

The journey from Coca to TBS is quite long: a boat trip along the Napo River to a dock for the oil extraction concession, then a bus ride to another boat which takes you along the Tiputini River to the field station. Each leg is about 2h long, with some extra waiting to throw in. We did see a **black agouti** around *Yasuni Station* (where you get the second boat from, owned by the Catholic Uni of Quito) and **pink river dolphins** just after boarding the second boat. We arrived in Tiputini in the pouring rain at about 4.30pm and got shown to our accommodation. I don't think that an afternoon/evening walk was on offer, but given the torrential rain, we didn't mind too much.



10/09

We took a morning boat trip to the parrot salt lick with a guide called *Romero* with a group of students from Drexel University. Romero was a fantastic guide, very knowledgeable and with an

infectious enthusiasm. Although the parrot flock was around, they happened to not come down to the lick for ages apparently owing to it being rather overcast. After a while of waiting, we floated down-stream for a while, with some nice birds, a few **capybara** but most excitingly a small group of **Napo saki**. Once we returned to the lick, the parrots eventually came down, and Romero also found some freshwater stingrays by the boat mooring.

In the afternoon we were introduced to our guide for the remaining 1.5 days, called **Santiago**. He took us on a walk to the watch tower, from where we spotted **Poepig's woolly, red howler, white-bellied spider monkey** and on the walk also saw **golden mantled tamarins**.

Spotlight: Santiago

Our guide Santiago was brilliant. He was always on time, very polite and kind, and happy to do things off the program. His English is very limited, but he speaks Spanish very slowly, so it was really easy to understand for Marina who is an Italian native speaker. Marina particularly appreciated time spent with Santiago as he was not just focused on wildlife: he has a wealth of knowledge about plants and insects, indigenous traditions and remedies.

11/09

We'd mentioned we were interested in seeing **pygmy marmosets**, so early-ish in the morning Santiago took us on a trip to a specific tree where they feed. This was a boat trip, followed by a short walk. Unfortunately, the trip was unsuccessful, but Santiago suggested trying again later in the afternoon around 4.30/5pm which is supposed to be a better time as it is when they're more active feeding. For the rest of the morning we enjoyed a nice boat trip along the river, followed by a canoe trip around a lake. At the lake, we saw lots of nice birds, including **hoatzin** and **tinamous**.

In the afternoon, we went for a walk in a different area of the forest and happened to find a mixed species group of **squirrel** and **capuchin monkeys**. The squirrel monkeys were obviously very inquisitive. We returned to the station to get a boat and try again for **pygmy marmoset**. Around the first bend in the river, we had fantastic pink dolphin sightings - jumping clear of the water and messing about in our wake. And then on our arrival to the **pygmy marmoset** tree, Santiago straightaway found them (based upon [this publication](#), they should be **eastern pygmy marmoset**, *Cebuella niveiventris*, with the western pygmy marmoset, *Cebuella pygmaea*, found north of the Napo). They were shy at first but then realised we were not a threat and came out to feed and just mess about in their trees. The group seemed like at least 10 or so individuals (including some very small young ones), although most sightings were of only ever see 2 or 3 at a time.

We were told there is a **Spix's night monkey** that lives in a tree just near the restaurant and comes out at about 6/6.30pm. We tried to look for it twice but failed to see it.

12/09

Ben took a little pre-breakfast walk round the station: from our accommodation, past the research lab, to the student accommodation area. This is where Romero had the previous morning seen some Titi monkeys, however Ben only saw the ever-present **woolly monkeys**. We set off at 7.40 or so for Coca, doing the same journey as before but in reverse. The boat first



This photo was taken by one of the students from Drexel University (Etienne Falquet).

passed a swimming **red brocket deer**, which promptly headed for the bank and bolted. We then stumbled upon a young **jaguar** swimming along the river. The jaguar swam to the other bank and looked back at us before heading into the forest. While the encounter was brief, the views were stunning.

We were expected into Coca at between 12.30 and 2pm, but didn't arrive until nearly 3pm, after lots of random waiting delays and stops. We met with *German Sanchez* just before 3pm, and he was rather generous not minding having to wait for us. We arrived at *San Isidro Lodge* at 6.30pm. San Isidro (\$455 including half board and transfers) is a very luxurious lodge. We had a large and comfortable room with a balcony and the food was some of the best we've had in the whole trip.

Spotlight: Food at San Isidro

The food at San Isidro was excellent. They offer a tasting menu for dinner, which we didn't go for as we thought it would be too excessive, but actually regretted not having in hindsight. Still, the dinner was delicious, as was breakfast the next day. They sell their own homemade jam, which we bought as a little memento to take home.

As soon as we'd dropped our bags, we headed out for walk with **Alexis**, the manager and guide, for a walk on the grounds looking for the **Lemurine night monkeys**. While Alexis could hear them, unfortunately we didn't seem them in an hour of searching, so went to the restaurant for a dinner. Just as we finished up, Alexis came running in to tell us he had found the Lemurine night monkeys and took us straight to see them. They were feeding high up in a tree on the path that is above the swimming pool, and it was just very kind of Alexis to carry on looking while we'd been eating.

13/09

We spent the early morning at San Isidro birdwatching from our room's balcony and at the bird feeders on the restaurant balcony; and taking their antpitta walk. **Red tailed squirrel** and **black agouti** were common visitors to the feeders with fruit on them. We then left for Papallacta at about 10am or so, and took a brief stop at *Guango Lodge* for the **sword-billed hummingbird**, which promptly made an appearance. Ben hadn't noticed that Jon recommends a place there for a **mountain myotis** roost, so that is also an option in the area.

In Papallacta, we stayed at the *Thermas de Papallacta* (\$384 for two nights, including breakfast) so that Ben could have access to the grounds at night to look for porcupine and so that Marina could enjoy the pools. In hindsight it was a very good decision as guests have access to a doctor 24/7, which came in handy when Marina was unwell with altitude sickness and was given coca leaf tea and an aspirin. To keep prices down, we had all meals except for breakfast from the many restaurants just outside the gates. After dropping our bags, we met with **Mario** and **Patrizio Pillajo** at about 12.30.



Papallacta guides – Mario and Patrizio Pillajo – slight hesitance

We contacted the brothers Mario and Patrizio as they seem to be the main guides operating in the area. It's worth noting that they now won't work with any other driver, and so if you want them as a guide you have to pay for guiding (\$120/day) plus their car (\$100/day). They also charge

a bit extra for going on night walks and for splitting the time up. They charged us \$520 for 1 full day and two half days. If you do hire the brothers, bring a spare torch. Patrizio was easy enough to spend time with, and acted as our guide most of the time, with Mario only coming along for night walks. Mario was a bit of an odd character and was a little difficult to deal with both before our visit, and then also during it. Our advice is probably not to hire a guide if you can avoid it – the tapir(s) will either be in the cow field or not, the bears are actually best outside of the national park, and the porcupine would be straightforward with a thermal and I'm not convinced guides helped that much for them.

That first afternoon, we went with Patrizio into the *Coyambe Coca National Park (CCNP)* from the gate above the *Thermas de Papallacta* hotel. We saw very little during our time inside the national park, although the vistas are absolutely stunning. On our way back to the hotel (around 4.20pm) Patrizio spotted a **mountain tapir** on the far side of the valley in a cow field. This is the valley that you drive along to go from the hotel to the CCNP gate. Then look across to the left as you drive in the direction of the CCNP, and that is where the tapirs are. This tapir was just happily grazing, and had a collar on it – so may well have been the individual that Charles Foley saw here earlier in the year. We then headed out for a night walk on which I found a **Paramo Andean mouse** climbing in the thickets. Unfortunately, that was the highlight of the night.



14/09

The next morning, Marina stayed behind at the hotel to spend the day at the Thermas, while Ben and Patricio searched for **spectacled bear** along main the Coca-Quito road. We first tried the area around the [Three Virgins](#) without luck, and then Patricio stopped a bit further towards Quito, [here](#), and scanned the hillsides to the southwest. He quickly found a bear in the spot that is highlighted by the yellow circle from in the Google Maps street view, which itself is a bit above the little row of

shops/cafés, toward Papallacta. We watched as the bear tore out and chomped on bromeliads. After about 40 minutes, the bear decided to rest up, and we headed back to the hotel, via an area within the CCNP called the Antennas, where we saw **Andean white-tailed deer** and **Andean rabbit**. It was clear that Patrizio knew exactly where to look for the bear, and his searching was really rather impressive. You'll need a scope if you want to do this by yourself. In the afternoon, we returned to the bear spot, so that Marina could hopefully see the bear. Indeed, the bear did not disappoint, and couldn't have moved more than a few hundred metres.



That evening, Ben went for a night walk with Mario and Patricio again. It got off to a rather bad start when Mario and Patricio saw a **stump-tailed porcupine** cross the road just outside the hotel lobby at 7.30pm. I arrived 2 mins later, by which time they had lost the porcupine (I still don't know how). We spent the next 20 mins looking but to no avail. We then carried on up the mountain and parked fairly early on for Mario and I to walk on foot along the stream, and in the cow fields of the valley. Mario found the collared tapir again, in basically the same spot as the day before, and this time there were two – the second uncollared so that was rather nice. I found us a **striped hog-nosed skunk** and then a rufous banded owl. Given that at this point we'd spent about 3.5hrs searching in scrub along the stream and dotting the cow fields with no success, I suggested that we return to the hotel and look around the grounds there as we knew there was at least a porcupine in the area. Mario agreed, but when we got back to the hotel a couple of minutes later said that he and Patrizio would now be heading home.

Rather frustrated, I resumed the search for the one they'd seen earlier by the hotel reception. I spoke with a nightwatchman, who said that the porcupines were rarely so low, more typically higher up the valley. On his advice, I headed back to the area where the path leads from the hotel along the stream. Just as I was leaving the hotel complex, by the church in the top right of the map below (circled red), I looked up to see a **stump-tailed porcupine** staring down at me. I suspect that the porcupines are at quite density in the area along the stream and into the hotel grounds, and that with a thermal they would have been rather straightforward to find. I also saw a bat hunting over the bus parking area for the hotel, but no idea what species it was.





15/09

As we'd seen everything Ben had come looking for, and he hadn't had time to enjoy the spa, we decided to spend the morning relaxing in the pools outside our room.

We met with *Santiago Garzon*, our driver for the next three days at 10.30 at the hotel reception to head to Bellavista. We stopped halfway on the outskirts of Quito at *Mitad del Mundo*, the monument to the Equator, which was a bit expensive but still interesting. We carried on towards Bellavista, and stopped for lunch at a brilliant little café that Santiago knew of, on the edge of the *Alambi Reserve*. There, Santiago was kind enough to contact Paz de las Aves for us as we had a booking for the next morning, but we just wanted to check that it was all ok. We had made the booking via email using Google Translate, as the staff at Paz de las Aves don't speak English. The café had a set of hummingbird feeders and sliced banana. We saw various birds and **red-tailed squirrel** before continuing to Bellavista, arriving in the rain in the late afternoon.

We picked *Bellavista Lodge* (\$377 including breakfast, any guiding and dinner extra) as they have regular sightings of **olinguito** around 7pm. The room, while having a very nice large window onto the rainforest, was rather disappointing for the price and needed a bit of TLC. Dinner was rather disappointing and felt very much a la English cuisine in the 90s. Our recommendation would be instead to have a warm lunch during the day in Mindo, and then packed dinner, which we did on the second day.

Marina was still recovering from being a bit under the weather, so Ben birded a bit by himself after our arrival but with not too many species to report. One of the guides said he would watch out for **olinguito** while we had dinner, but didn't. We were rather relieved that, after dinner, the bananas hadn't all gone. Despite the rain, the olinguito arrived at 19.45 or so and then stayed around for quite a while, before being chased off by a **kinkajou** around 20.30. Despite the advice that I had got when I'd emailed Bellavista (that olinguitos were there most nights), my guide on the final morning would explain that we actually got a



bit lucky – the olinguito only coming every now and then, and there often being 3-4 nights on the bounce with no sign. Still the best place to look, we suspect. We looked for bats at the hummingbird feeders, but they were mainly empty with no bats coming in. This was a problem in the mornings too, when the usual hummingbird rush was rather muted until later in the morning when the guide filled the feeders up.

16/09

We took an early morning trip to *Paz de las Aves* which we'd arranged directly ourselves. The tour was utterly fantastic: 5 **antpittas** (including giant), **dark-backed wood-quail**, and of course the **cock-of-the-rock** lek. Santiago (who rather nicely for us was very keen on joining for the walk itself) said this was a very normal experience for Paz de las Aves – to us, it felt spectacularly lucky and certainly in the top 5 birding experiences Ben has ever had. So even if it is "just" birds, definitely go! We also saw the near ubiquitous **red-tailed squirrel**. The tour finished with a traditional Ecuadorian breakfast which was very much needed after an early morning walk.



On our way back from Paz, we stopped at *San Tadeo Bird Garden* where we saw a **central American agouti**, though no **mountain coati**. The owner explained that these are very site-faithful for a little bit, then move off all of a sudden and that is it. *Mashpi Lodge* is clearly the place for them, but it is very expensive. After lunch in Mindo, we headed back to Bellavista, where Ben birded for a little while around the lodge, before having sandwiches for dinner, and then sitting at the feeder. The only guests that night were a couple of **kinkajous** that stuck around for quite some time.

17/09

Ben went on the 6.30am guided walk around Bellavista by himself while Marina had a lie-in. The guide mentioned that a pair of **tayra** would visit the newly established toucan feeder, which had been set up for ~5 months, almost every day. When they returned from the guided walk, other guests came and showed Ben a photo and asked what on earth it was... He was rather pleased and relieved when the tayra came back a couple of minutes later, and the pair were then back and forth a lot until 7.15 or so, by which time they had polished off the banana.



We spent one more morning in Mindo at the Canopy Zip Line, which was great fun even for Ben who is afraid of heights. They have 10 zip lines across the forest and run it in small groups accompanied

by two guides. On longer ones, there is the option of doing the zip line in different positions (superman: on your tummy; or butterfly: upside down). Marina tried the superman, which was really good fun. Marina then also did the Tarzan Swing, which was terrifying but a really exciting experience if you enjoy the adrenaline. Santiago very nicely stayed at basecamp and took photos of us as we came in on the last zip line.

We then carried on to *Hacienda Los Mortinos*, on the side of Cotopaxi, where we had to sadly say bye to Santiago. Hacienda Los Mortinos (\$115/night including breakfast) is a stunning lodge with spacious, comfortable rooms and tasty food. Each room has its own fireplace, which they start for you.



18/09

We went for an early bird walk around the grounds to see Cotopaxi (do pack some warm clothes – it is chilly in the morning!), before enjoying another great breakfast. We then did a 2h30 horse ride from 9.15, where we had a brief sighting of an **Andean white-tailed deer**. This was a great way to see more of Cotopaxi and the grounds. One word of caution, however, as the

horses were a little wilder than the horses we're used to in the UK. They were very keen to canter/gallop and when a stray dog decided to chase the horses, a few bucked which resulted in one of the guides being through off his saddle – thankfully, he was fine.

After the horse ride, we took a taxi to Machachi, where we waited 40mins for a bus to take us to Cuenca. Tip: if given the option, ask to have your luggage in the body of the car rather than on the back of a pick-up truck, if you're driving through a town. Our taxi driver was very kind and waited with us until we could flag down a bus.

Getting a bus down the Panamericana

We wanted to get a bus down the Panamericana as it was cheaper than hiring a driver for the same leg (\$12/person for the bus, compared to ~\$250 for a driver), and we thought it would be a great way to see more of the country, as well as Chimborazo. Buses run from Quito to Cuenca, however they are not showing online and you can't buy tickets in advance. Ask your driver or lodge for directions to the bus stop (this is not always clearly indicated). Ours was on the side of the E35 by the bridge to Aloasi, [here](#). While buses approach the stop, one of the drivers will lean out the door and list all the stops. The final destination is also shown on the front windscreen. There are many companies that operate this route, ours was an Expresso Sucre bus, which was remarkably comfortable. The bus had a toilet (although not the cleanest) and made regular stops to service stations. They also played movies, although they were in Spanish.

After a very slow journey (~8h), we arrived at our Cuenca hotel late (22.30). We stayed at NASS Casa del Aguila (£35/night) which was very comfortable and conveniently located.



19/09

Cuenca was one of Marina's favourite stops. The city has a very European feeling and was clearly steeped in history and culture. In the morning, we joined a great free walking tour, which took us through the main landmarks and the flower market. We had lunch at the city market and visited the *Sombrero Museum*, which has really nice views of the city. We tried to go to the *Pumapungo Museum* but it is unfortunately closed on Mondays – a shame as it sounded excellent and was recommended by our guide. In the evening we took a taxi up to the Mirador de Turi to watch the sunset. There are some nice food options around, but they are quite expensive.

20/09

We had booked onto a tour of Ingapirca, but unfortunately Ingapirca is closed on Tuesdays, so the tour operator *Cuenca Best Tours* organised a bespoke tour to Cojitambo, Ingapirca, Gualaceo and Chordeleg. Our guide, Andres, was incredibly knowledgeable about the history of Ecuador and took us through the change in rule from local indigenous communities, to the Inca and then the Spanish colonisation. We could only see Ingapirca from the outside, but it's the kind of monument that we suspect it's not that much more special close-up. Andres did take us on a walk on the private land around the site where we met a local resident who'd found Inca remains in his land (including pottery and a human skull!). We ourselves just happened to find a piece of pottery sticking out from the bank as we were walking along. This felt incredibly special. Gualaceo and Chordeleg were also very nice stops and we even had a tour of a family-run shop that still makes traditional *macanas* by hand.



In the evening, our driver for the next day Eddy Zea insisted on meeting with us. He explained that his vehicle was "broken" (although he'd driven in it to meet us) and his uncle Patricio would drive us instead. We were slightly nervous that it was a scam but we texted our guide from earlier Andres who knew Eddy, and he reassured us.

21/09

We left with Patricio for Puerto Lopez at 0830 or so. In the car, it became apparent this was not a scam, as he explained that Eddy often booked him work. We were relieved, although a little annoyed that Eddy had seemingly misled us. En route, we spotted a **green iguana** burrowing on the sand dunes at the side of the road. In Pungay we saw a **humpback whale** with a calf breaching about 150m off the beach, which was really rather special!

Our last top was Puerto Lopez. This was mainly our pied-a-terre for *Isla de la Plata*, which is a great option for those who (like us) don't have the time or money to get out to the Galapagos. We had



also hoped that Puerto Lopez would have been a nice beach stay to end the holiday with. However, the town front is more of a run-down Mediterranean resort than stunning tropical beach, and beyond the esplanade is a quite rough fishing village. This wasn't helped by the fact that the weather was quite overcast and we stayed there during the week, outside of high season, so the various bars and restaurants all vie for the ~7 tourists that are present then, and it feels somewhat abandoned.

22/09

We took a boat trip to *Isla de la Plata* booked through Palo Santo. The trip combined a walk on the island to look for **booby** (we saw **blue-footed**, **red-footed** and **nazca**, plus **Inca tern** and **red billed tropicbird**), snorkelling (really great – loads of stunning fishes and turtles) and whale watching (mating **humpbacks** and a couple of remarkable shy **bottle-nosed dolphins** with them).



23/09

This last day, was the only disappointing experience of the trip. The previous day, once we'd realised chilling on the beach was not an option, we were persuaded by our guide on the Isla de la Plata tour to have him organise us a private trip to the *El Pital/Rio Blanco* community. Ben had hoped to have a chance of **Guayaquil squirrel** or **black howler**. However it turned out that the tour was run by the guide's dad who did not know his creatures at all, and had rather poor spotting abilities. After a rather boring walk in the forest without seeing much, we went back to have lunch at his family home, which felt awkward. Overall, we felt rather ripped off and in hindsight we should have taken an organised tour to the *Agua Blanca* community instead. We did see a **South American sealion** in the Puerto Lopez harbour from the hotel in the afternoon, though, so that was nice.

24/09

We took a taxi organised by the hotel to to Guayaquil Airport to catch our flight home after a truly spectacular trip.

Overall species lists

Mammals

1. Andean rabbit
2. Andean white-tailed deer
3. Black agouti
4. Bottlenose dolphin
5. Capuchin monkey
6. Capybara
7. Central American agouti
8. Golden mantled tamarin
9. Greater sac winged bat
10. Howler monkey
11. Humpback whale
12. Jaguar
13. Kinkajou
14. Lemurine night monkey
15. Mountain tapir
16. Napo saki
17. Olinguito
18. Paramo Andean mice
19. Pink river dolphin
20. Poepig's woolly monkey
21. Proboscis bat
22. Eastern pygmy marmoset
23. Red brocket deer
24. Red-tailed squirrel
25. South American sealion
26. Spectacled bear
27. Squirrel monkey
28. Striped hog nosed skunk
29. Tayra
30. White bellied spider monkey

Other taxa

Green turtle
Green iguana
Common big headed rain frog
Crested forest toad
Ecuadorian poison dart frog
Ostecephalus yasuni
Rhaebo toad sp (spotted or yellow spotted)
Smoky jungle frog

Birds

1. Amazon kingfisher
2. American kestrel
3. Andean condor
4. Andean emerald
5. Andean gull
6. Andean lapwing
7. Andean solitaire
8. Aninga
9. Azaras spinetail
10. Bananaquit
11. Band tailed pigeon
12. Band tailed seed eater
13. Band winged nightjar
14. Bar bellied woodpecker
15. Barred fruit eater
16. Beryl spangled tanager
17. Black and white tody flycatcher
18. Black billed seed finch
19. Black billed shrike tyrant
20. Black capped tanager
21. Black caracara
22. Black chested buzzard eagle
23. Black chinned mountain tanager
24. Black crested warbler
25. Black flowerpiercer
26. Black headed parrot
27. Black necked stilt
28. Black phoebe
29. Black striped sparrow
30. Black tailed tatyra
31. Black tailed trainbearer
32. Black throated mango
33. Black vulture
34. Blackburian warbler
35. Blue and black tanager
36. Blue and white swallow
37. Blue and yellow macaw
38. Blue crowned manakin
39. Blue footed booby
40. Blue grey tanager
41. Blue headed parrot
42. Blue mantled thornbill
43. Blue winged mountain tanager
44. Blue-and-white swallow
45. Blue-grey tanager
46. Blue-winged mountain-tanager
47. Boat billed flycatcher
48. Booted rackettail
49. Brown backed chat tyrant
50. Brown bellied swallow
51. Brown capped vireo
52. Brown chested martin
53. Brown inca
54. Brown pelican
55. Brown violetear
56. Buff breasted wren
57. Buff tailed coronet
58. Buff winged starfrontlet
59. Buff-tailed coronet
60. Canada warbler
61. Carunculated Caracara
62. Cattle egret
63. Channel billed toucan
64. Chestnut breasted coronet
65. Chestnut capped brush-Finch
66. Chestnut capped swallow
67. Chestnut crowned antpitta
68. Chestnut winged coronet
69. Chestnut-winged cinclodes
70. Cinnamon flycatcher
71. Cobalt winged parakeet
72. Cock of the rock
73. Cocoli heron
74. Collared Inca
75. Collared warbling finch
76. Common ground dove
77. Common potoo
78. Common tody flycatcher
79. Crested oropendula
80. Crested caracara
81. Crested guan
82. Crimson crested woodpecker
83. Crimson rumped toucanet
84. Croaking ground dove
85. Crowned woodnymph
86. Curunculated caracara
87. Dark backed wood-quail
88. Double banded pygmy tyrant
89. Double throated kite
90. Drab water tyrant
91. Dusky bellied flycatcher
92. Dusky bush-tanager
93. Dusky headed parakeet
94. Eared dove
95. Ecuadorian thrush
96. Ecuadorian trogon
97. Emerald toucanet [Marina only]
98. Empress brilliant
99. Fawn-breasted brilliant
100. Festive Amazon
101. Flame faced tanager
102. Flavescent flycatcher
103. Fork tailed palm swift
104. Georgeted woodstar
105. Giant antpitta
106. Giant hummingbird
107. Glossy black thrush
108. Glossy flowerpiercer
109. Golden grosbeak
110. Golden headed quetzal
111. Golden tanager
112. Golden-naped tanager
113. Gorgeted woodstar
114. Great ani
115. Great black hawk
116. Great egret
117. Great kiskadee
118. Great sapphirewing
119. Great thrush
120. Great white egret
121. Greater yellow headed vulture
122. Green and black fruiteater
123. Green and gold tanager
124. Green jay
125. Green kingfisher
126. Green oropendula
127. Grey and blue tanager
128. Grey breasted wood wren
129. Grey capped flycatcher
130. Grey elancia
131. Grey headed gull
132. Grey-backed hawk
133. Grey-lined hawk
134. Harris hawk
135. Hilder barbet

136. Hoatzin
137. House Sparrow
138. Inca tern
139. Kelp gull
140. Large billed tern
141. Least sandpiper
142. Lemon rumped tanager
143. Lesser kiskadee
144. Lesser violetear
145. Limpkin
146. Lineated foliage gleaner
147. Long billed startthroat
148. Long tailed mockingbird
149. Long tailed sylph
150. Magnificent Frigatebird
151. Many banded aracari
152. Masked crimson tanager
153. Masked flowerpiercer
154. Masked trogon
155. Mealy Amazon
156. Montane woodcreeper
157. Mountain wren
158. Moustached antpitta
159. Nazca booby
160. Neotropic Cormorant
161. Ochre breasted antpitta
162. Olivaceous woodcreeper
163. Opal crowned tanager
164. Opal rumped tanager
165. Orange bellied euphonia
166. Orange winged parrot
167. Pale legged hornero
168. Pale vented pigeon
169. Palm tanager
170. Paradise tanager
171. Pearled treerunner
172. Pink footed Shearwater
173. Piping guan
174. Plain coloured seedeater
175. Plate-billed mountain-toucan
176. Plumbeous sierra-finch
177. Purple honey creeper
178. Purple throated fruitcrow
179. Purple throated woodstar
180. Purple-bibbed white tip
181. Red billed tropicbird
182. Red capped cardinal
183. Red faced spinetail
184. Red footed booby
185. Red headed barbet
186. Red Phalarope
187. Red-billed parrot
188. Ringed kingfisher
189. Roadside hawk
190. Rock dove
191. Roseate spoonbill
192. Ruddy ground dove
193. Rufous banded owl
194. Rufous bellied nighthawk
195. Rufous collared sparrow
196. Rufous headed Chachalaca
197. Rufous spinetail
198. Rufous tailed Hummingbird
199. Rufus bellied euphonia
200. Russet backed oropendula
201. Russet crowned warbler
202. Saffron finch
203. Salvins currawong
204. Scarlet macaw
205. Scrub blackbird
206. Semipalmated plover
207. Shining sunbeam
208. Shiny cowbird
209. Short tailed woodstar
210. Short-tailed swift
211. Sickle winged guan
212. Sierran elaenia
213. Silver beaked tanager
214. Slate colored coot
215. Slate throated redstart
216. Snail Kite
217. Snowy egret
218. Solitary sandpiper
219. Southern lapwing
220. Speckle breasted wren
221. Speckled hummingbird
222. Speckle-faced parrot
223. Spectacled redstart
224. Spot fronted swift
225. Spotted sandpiper
226. Stout billed cinclodes
227. Streaked saltator
228. Streaked tuftedcheek
229. Striped treehunter
230. Strong billed woodcreeper
231. Sun grebe
232. Swainson's thrush
233. Swallow tailed kite
234. Swallow winged puffbird
235. Sword Billed Hummingbird
236. Tawny antpitta
237. Tawny bellied hermit
238. Thick billed euphonia
239. Three lined warbler
240. Tourmaline sunangel
241. Tricolored brush-Finch
242. Tropical kingbird
243. Tropical parula
244. Turkey vulture
245. Turquoise jay
246. Tyrian metaltail
247. Undulated tinamou
248. Variable (Guerney's) hawk
249. Variable seed-eater
250. Velvet-purple coronet
251. Violet fronted brilliant
252. Violet tailed sylph
253. Wedge-rumped storm petrel
254. Western sandpiper
255. White banded swallow
256. White bellied antpitta
257. White bellied woodstar
258. White chinned woodcreeper
259. White collared swift
260. White edged oriole
261. White fronted nunbird
262. White lined tanager
263. White necked Jacobin
264. White sided flowerpiercer
265. White tailed hillstar
266. White tailed Trogon
267. White tailed tyrannulet
268. White throated tinamou
269. White throated toucan
270. White tipped dove
271. White winged brush-Finch
272. White winged swallow
273. Whooping Motmot
274. Wire tailed manakin
275. Wood Stork
276. Yellow bellied dacnis
277. Yellow billed pintail
278. Yellow breasted antpitta
279. Yellow breasted brush-Finch

280. Yellow crowned Amazon

281. Yellow crowned night heron

282. Yellow rumped caseque

283. Yellow tufted woodpecker

Site by site species list

Quito area
<i>Birds</i>
Black vulture
Blue and white swallow
Common ground dove
Glossy black thrush

Coca	
<i>Birds</i>	
Black throated mango	Lesser kiskadee
Black vulture	Pale vented pigeon
Blue and white swallow	Ruddy ground dove
Blue grey tanager	Russet backed oropendula
Buff breasted wren	Silver breaker tanager
Great egret	Snowy egret
Great kiskadee	White winged swallow

Tiputini			
<i>Birds</i>		<i>Mammals</i>	
Amazon kingfisher	Greater yellow headed vulture	Scarlet macaw	Black agouti
Black billed seed Finch	Green and gold tanager	Shiny cowbird	Capuchin monkey
Black Caracara	Green kingfisher	Short-tailed swift	Capybara
Black headed parrot	Green oropendula	Silver beaked tanager	Golden mantled tamarin
Black tailed tatyra	Grey capped flycatcher	Solitary sandpiper	Greater sac winged bat
Blue and white swallow	Grey elancia	Southern lapwing	Howler monkey
Blue and yellow macaw	Hilder barbet	Spotted sandpiper	Jaguar
Blue crowned manakin	Hoatzin	Strong billed woodcreeper	Napo saki
Blue headed parrot	Large billed tern	Sun grebe	Pink river dolphin
Boat billed flycatcher	Many banded aracari	Swallow tailed kite	Poepfigs woolly monkey
Brown chested martin	Masked crimson tanager	Swallow winged puffbird	Proboscis bat
Channel billed toucan	Mealy Amazon	Tropical king bird	Eastern pygmy marmoset
Cobalt winged parakeet	Opal crowned tanager	Undulated tinamou	Red brocket deer
Cocoi heron	Opal rumped tanager	White banded swallow	Squirrel monkey
Created oropendula	Orange winged parrot	White chinned woodcreeper	White bellied spider monkey
Crimson crested woodpecker	Palm tanager	White fronted nunbird	
Double banded pygmy tyrant	Paradise tanager	White tailed Trogon	<i>Other</i>
Double throated kite	Piping guan	White throated tinamou	Common big headed rain frog
Drab water tyrant	Purple honey creeper	White throated toucan	Crested forest toad
Dusky bellied flycatcher	Purple throated fruitcrow	White winged swallow	Ecuadorian poison dart frog
Dusky headed parakeet	Red capped cardinal	Wire tailed manakin	Ostecephalus yasuni

Festive Amazon	Ringed kingfisher	Yellow bellied dacnis	Rhaebo toad sp (spotted or yellow spotted)
Fork tailed palm swift	Roadside hawk	Yellow crowned Amazon	Smoky jungle frog
Great Ani	Rufus bellied euphonia	Yellow rumped caseque	Freshwater sting ray
Great black hawk	Russet backed oropendula	Yellow tufted woodpecker	
Great egret	Salvins currasow		

San Isidro		
<i>Birds</i>		<i>Mammals</i>
Azaras spinetail	Flame faced tanager	Black agouti
Barred fruit eater	Georgeted woodstar	Lemurine night monkey
Beryl spangled tanager	Glossy black thrush	Red tailed squirrel
Black and white tody flycatcher	Green jay	
Black crested warbler	Grey breasted wood wren	
Blackburian warbler	Long tailed sylph	
Brown violetear	Masked trogon	
Canada warbler	Montane woodcreeper	
Chestnut winged coronet	Mountain wren	
Cinnamon flycatcher	Rufous collared sparrow	
Common tody flycatcher	Speckled hummingbird	
Emerald toucanet [Marina only]	White bellied antpitta	
Fawn breasted brilliant	White collared swift	

German's house
<i>Birds</i>
Bananaquit
Booted rackettail
Gorgeted woodstar
Long tailed sylph
Violet fronted brilliant
White tailed hillstar

Guango lodge
<i>Birds</i>
Buff winged starfrontlet
Chestnut breasted coronet
Collared Inca
Gorgeted woodstar
Sword Billed Hummingbird
Tourmaline sunangel
White bellied woodstar

Papallacta		
<i>Birds</i>		<i>Mammals</i>
American kestrel	Great thrush	Andean rabbit
Andean condor	Plain coloured seedeater	Andean white-tailed deer
Andean gull	Plumbeous sierra-finch	Mountain tapir! (4.20pm + at night)
Bar bellied woodpecker	Rufous banded owl	Paramo Andean mice
Black chested buzzard eagle	Shining sunbeam	Spectacled bear! (9.20 am + 3.45pm)
Blue mantled thornbill	Spectacled redstart	Striped hog nosed skunk
Brown backed chat tyrant	Stout billed cinclodes	
Brown bellied swallow	Tawny antpitta	
Curunculated Caracara	Turquoise jay	
Glossy flowerpiercer	Tyrian metaltail	
Great sapphirewing	Variable (Guerney's) hawk	

Alambi reserve	
<i>Birds</i>	<i>Mammals</i>
Bananaquit	Red tailed squirrel
Blue winged mountain tanager	
Blue-grey tanager	
Booted rackettail	
Collared Inca	
Crowned woodnymph	
Long billed startthroat	
Rufous tailed Hummingbird	
Violet tailed sylph	

Bellavista			
<i>Birds</i>			<i>Mammals</i>
Band winged nightjar	Golden grosbeak	Russet crowned warbler	Kinkajou
Beryl spangled tanager	Golden-naped tanager	Sickle winged guan	Olinguito
Blue and black tanager	Green and black fruiteater	Sierran elaenia	Red-tailed squirrel
Blue-and-white swallow	Grey breasted wood wren	Slate throated redstart	Tayra
Blue-winged mountain-tanager	Lesser violetear	Speckled hummingbird	
Booted rackettail	Lineated foliage gleaner	Speckle-faced parrot	
Brown capped vireo	Masked flowerpiercer	Streaked tuftedcheek	
Buff tailed coronet	Masked trogon	Striped treehunter	
Chestnut capped brush-Finch	Montane woodcreeper	Swainson's thrush	
Chestnut capped swallow	Orange bellied euphonia	Tricolored brush-Finch	
Chestnut-crowned antpitta	Pearled treerunner	Turquoise jay	
Cinnamon flycatcher	Plate-billed mountain-toucan	White sided flowerpiercer	
Collared Inca	Purple throated woodstar	White tailed tyrannulet	
Fawn-breasted brilliant	Red faced spinetail	White tipped dove	
Flavescent flycatcher	Red-billed parrot	White winged brush-Finch	
Glossy black thrush	Rufous spinetail		

Paz de las aves			
<i>Birds</i>			<i>Mammals</i>
Andean emerald	Fawn breasted brilliant	Red headed barbet	Red tailed squirrel
Andean solitaire	Flame faced tanager	Rufous bellied nighthawk	
Black phoebe	Giant antpitta	Rufous tailed hummingbird	
Black vulture	Golden headed quetzal	Speckled hummingbird	
Blue and white swallow	Golden naper tanager	Spectacled redstart	
Blue winged mountain tanager	Golden tanager	Spot fronted swift	
Blue-grey tanager	Grey breasted wood wren	Tawny bellied hermit	
Booted rackettail	Lemon rumped tanager	Tropical kingbird	
Brown inca	Lesser violetear	Turkey vulture	
Buff-tailed coronet	Masked flowerpiercer	Velvet-purple coronet	
Cattle egret	Montane woodcreeper	Violet tailed sylph	
Chestnut crowned antpitta	Mountain wren	White collared swift	
Cock of the rock	Moustached antpitta	Yellow breasted antpitta	
Common potoo	Ochre breasted antpitta		
Crested guan	Orange bellied euphonia		
Crimson rumped toucanet	Palm tanager		
Dark backed wood-quail	Purple throated woodstar		
Ecuadorian thrush	Purple-bibbed white tip		

San Tadeo birding		
<i>Birds</i>		<i>Mammals</i>
Black capped tanager	Montane woodcreeper	Central American agouti
Black chinned mountain tanager	Orange bellied euphonia	Red tailed squirrel
Black striped sparrow	Palm tanager	
Blue-grey tanager	Red headed barbet	
Booted rackettail	Rufous collared sparrow	
Brown inca	Scrub blackbird	
Dusky bush-tanager	Thick billed euphonia	
Ecuadorian thrush	Three lined warbler	
Empress brilliant	Velvet purple coronet	
Fawn breasted brilliant	Violet tailed sylph	
Flame faced tanager	White lined tanager	
Golden naped tanager	White necked Jacobin	
Golden tanager	Yellow breasted brush-Finch	
Lemon rumped tanager		
Masked flowerpiercer		

Cotopaxi		
<i>Birds</i>		<i>Mammals</i>
American kestrel	Carunculated Caracara	Andean white-tailed deer
Andean lapwing	Chestnut-winged cinclodes	
Black flowerpiercer	Giant hummingbird	
Black tailed trainbearer	Great thrush	
Brown backed chat tyrant	Plumbeous Sierra Finch	
Brown bellied swallow	Rufous collared sparrow	

Cuenca
<i>Birds</i>
American kestrel
Black chested buzzard eagle

Ingapirca	
<i>Birds</i>	
Andean gull	Great thrush
Band tailed pigeon	Great white egret
Band tailed seed eater	Rufous collared sparrow
Black billed shrike tyrant	Slate colored coot
Black flowerpiercer	Yellow billed pintail
Eared dove	

Drive Cuenca to Puerto Lopez		
<i>Birds</i>		<i>Mammals</i>
American kestrel	Kelp gull	Humpback whale (Pungay, including a baby breaching)
Black necked stilt	Limpkin [on return to Guayaquil]	
Black vulture	Long tailed mockingbird	<i>Other</i>
Brown chested martin	Magnificent Frigatebird	Green iguana
Brown pelican	Neotropic Cormorant	
Cattle egret	Rock dove	
Crested Caracara	Roseate spoonbill	
Croaking ground dove	Scrub blackbird	
Eared dove	Snail Kite	
Great white egret	Turkey vulture	
Grey headed gull	White edged oriole	
Harris hawk	Wood Stork	

Puerto Lopez		
<i>Birds</i>		<i>Mammals</i>
Aningha	Magnificent frigatebird	South American sealion
Black vulture	Saffron finch	
Blue footed booby	Semipalmated plover	
Brown pelican	Snowy egret	
Cocoi heron	Turkey vulture	
Eared dove	Western sandpiper	
House Sparrow	Yellow crowned night heron	

Isla de la Plata (including boat trip)		
<i>Birds</i>		<i>Mammals</i>
Blue footed booby	Red billed tropicbird	Bottlenose dolphin
Brown pelican	Red footed booby	Humpback whale (including mating)
Collared warbling finch	Red Phalarope	
Inca tern	Short tailed woodstar	<i>Other</i>
Long tailed mockingbird	Snowy egret	Angelfish
Magnificent frigatebird	Turkey vulture	Trigger fish
Nazca booby	Wedge-rumped storm petrel	Green turtle
Pink footed Shearwater		Sally Lightfoot crab

El Pital/Rio Blanco	
<i>Birds</i>	
Bananaquit	Rufous headed Chachalaca
Common tody flycatcher	Speckle breasted wren
Ecuadorian trogon	Streaked saltator
Grey and blue tanager	Tropical kingbird
Grey-backed hawk	Tropical parula
Grey-lined hawk	Variable seed-eater
Olivaceous woodcreeper	Whooping Motmot
Pale legged hornero	