

- **Dave Cox in Quito, Ecuador, Sept. 12, 2011**

David T. Cox



**David T. Cox**

cox david55@hotmail.com

To david cox, Kendis Muscheid, delia escalante, mark nesvig, Basil Diamos, Ray Harris, carrie carriearneFriendofDonsDaughterStephanie, Matthew Kauffman, paul moore, Chris Olson, Janice Hanks, Kim BrushFriendSteveKallan, StevesBrother, Chris Peterson, Willie Moon, art ehrenreich, Aaron Ricardi Valdez, Silk friend 2, Larry Phoenix College, David Cox, Jim Davidson, StephanieDonsDaughter Williams, Robert Phoenix College, FriendOfDonsDaughterSteffi Williams, Steve Phx Coll Sp, Tom Kinney, Silk friend, Steve'sFriendQuebec, COLLEEN STEELE, Pat Comus (100411), Donald Williams, Pete Cambridge, Joy Frerking, Lance Grey, jim johnson

From: **David T. Cox** (cox david55@hotmail.com)

Sent: Mon 9/12/11 1:44 PM

To: david cox (cox david55@hotmail.com); Kendis Muscheid (kmuschei@fclaw.com); delia escalante (delia.escalante@pcmail.maricopa.edu); mark nesvig (mnesvig@fclaw.com); Basil Diamos (bazmoe@aol.com); Ray Harris (rharris@fclaw.com); carrie carriearneFriendofDonsDaughterStephanie (carriestar22@yahoo.com); Matthew Kauffman (matthewkauffman@hotmail.com); paul moore (pmoore@azstatetaxlaw.com); Chris Olson (colson@fclaw.com); Janice Hanks (jhanks@fclaw.com); Kim BrushFriendSteveKallan (kabr0507@gmail.com); StevesBrother (steve\_rago@yahoo.com); Chris Peterson (copperstatebldg@msn.com); Willie Moon (willhemoon@yahoo.com); art ehrenreich (aehrenre@fclaw.com); Aaron Ricardi Valdez (ricardd@yahoo.com); Silk friend 2 (zdk@mtaonline.net); Larry Phoenix College (hilaros@cox.net); David Cox (dtcox@fclaw.com); Jim Davidson (jed1939@aol.com); StephanieDonsDaughter Williams (stephanie.n.williams@gmail.com); Robert Phoenix College (planetarydweller@hotmail.com); FriendOfDonsDaughterSteffi Williams (clandestine337@aol.com); Steve Phx Coll Sp (silk71520@msn.com); Tom Kinney (thomasbkinney@hotmail.com); Silk friend (christos@psarras.org); Steve'sFriendQuebec (alain.bourret@sympatico.ca); COLLEEN STEELE (colleen@colleensteele.com); Pat Comus (100411) (pcomus@cox.net); Donald Williams (donald.k.williams@gmail.com); Pete Cambridge (petecambridge@comcast.net); Joy Frerking (jfrerkin@fclaw.com); Lance Grey (lannytnt@aol.com); jim johnson (jjohnson@fclaw.com)

Hello everyone. I am on the road again, finally. I am sending this email a little early as I may be out-of-touch for a couple of weeks. Arrived in Quito close to midnight Thursday, but had no real jet lag as the time difference is just 2 hours from Arizona. Quito's elevation is close to 3,000 meters (10,000 ft), so one does notice the thinner air. Yesterday I got up and ran a little over 5 kilometers, mostly slight uphill going out, and although the legs worked fine, jogging a very slow pace I was huffing and puffing something fierce the entire distance; felt like an old man (snide and rude thoughts or comments from readers are here anticipated).

I have my return flight to the States set for November 29, so have almost 3 months; already I wish it was longer as I see the many things I want to do, and don't feel like rushing my trips anymore. The maximum tourist visa stay is three months. My flight out was fairly uneventful, except boarding the Delta Ecuador bound flight out of Atlanta; almost all the passengers were Ecuadorian, and the plane was full. As with most Latin American flights I have been on, many passengers seem to have small regard for "British propriety" such as forming lines, waiting for one's section to be called, limiting carry-ons to one item, and observing seat assignments once on board. We were delayed almost an hour with the massive confusion of boarding and sorting out appropriate seats. The flight crew seemed to be "above" all of this, and responded by ignoring all but the worst of the maelstrom to let it sort itself out. Amazing. At the very end, I was asked if I would mind moving to an aisle seat in an exit row so a mother and child could sit together; I readily agreed, and moved up to find myself beside an very nice young man with a long ponytail and tatoos, apparently a native Pacific islander. At first he had his arms forward, and I just noticed I felt a little crowded (we were in the two seat row, thankfully). After lift-off, he relaxed back into the seat, and his shoulder practically took a third of my seat room. I thought he was leaning into me, but he was perfectly upright. Then I noticed my knees were 6 inches from the seat in front, and his were pushed deeply into it. When he finally got up to stretch, his head touched the top of the cabin, and he could barely walk down the aisle, his shoulders bumping people on both sides. "Massive" barely seems adequate to describe him. But very nice.

As usual, I am "making the trip up" as I go. One thing on my must-do-list, of course, was finally to get to the Galapagos. I had read that anything booked from inside Ecuador, although less convenient, would be at minimum 30% cheaper (any trip to the Galapagos is very expensive). Further, I read if one could be very flexible about leaving on short notice, and had time to wait for opportunities, the cost could be further reduced by looking for the last minute bookings when the ships are trying to fill up any empty spaces just days before sailing. Well, my second day here I stumbled on exactly that opportunity and have paid just under half of the standard fare for an 8 day sail. I leave early tomorrow morning to fly to Isla Baltra, where I will board "The Beagle", believe it or not (for those to whom this means nothing, The Beagle was the name of Charles Darwin's ship when he visited the Galapagos). The Beagle is a 105 foot first-class luxury sailing schooner with solid teak wood decks, built 40 years ago in London. It takes just 13 passengers, with a crew of 5 and biologist guide. The itinerary is for the north and west islands, which only can be reached by 8 day cruises, and contain many of the rarer endemic bird species. I then have arranged to spend the following 8 days traveling on my own with day trips from Santa Cruz (the island with the largest town) and San Cristobal, which will permit me to visit the south and eastern islands. Thus, I hope to satisfy one more of my life-long ambitions, and probably will take thousands of photos. In 15 days I will return to Quito, where I will start work on finding similar opportunities for travel deep in the Amazon and to the Andes cloud forests, where I hope to do lots more wildlife and bird photography.

I have attached just a few photos, including my bed & breakfast hotel in the heart of the Mariscal (the center of "New Town" and the absolute center of night-life), one of the metrobuses, and the first three new species of birds I found in the heart of Quito; a Sparkling

Violetear (one of the 131 species of hummingbird found in Ecuador), an Eared Dove (very similar looking to mourning doves in the US), and a Great Thrush.

Later, Dave



Casa Sol, Mariscal, Quito, Ecuador



Metro by Parque El Ejido, Quito, Ecuador



Violetear female, Mariscal, Quito, Ecuador

Sparkling



Eared Dove, Mariscal, Quito, Ecuador



© 2011 by David T. Cox

Great Thrush, Mariscal, Quito,

Ecuador

- Dave Cox in Quito, Ecuador, reporting on Galapagos adventures, Fri. Sept. 30, 2011

[Photos](#) | 9/30/11 coxdavid55@hotmail.com, kmuschei@fclaw.com, delia.escalante@pcmail.maricopa.edu, mnesvig@fclaw.com, bazmoe@aol.com, rharris@fclaw.com, carriestar22@yahoo.com, matthewkauffman@hotmail.com, pmoore@azstatetaxlaw.com, colson@fclaw.com, jhanks@fclaw.com, kabr0507@gmail.com, steve\_rago@yahoo.com, copperstatebldg@msn.com, willhemoon@yahoo.com, aehrenre@fclaw.com, ricardd@yahoo.com, zdk@mtaonline.net, hilaros@cox.net, dtcox@fclaw.com, jed1939@aol.com, stephanie.n.williams@gmail.com, planetarydweller@hotmail.com, clandestine337@aol.com, silk71520@msn.com, thomasbkinney@hotmail.com, christos@psarras.org, alain.bourret@sympatico.ca, colleen@colleensteele.com, pcomus@cox.net, donald.k.williams@gmail.com, petecambridge@comcast.net, jfrerkin@fclaw.com, lannnytnt@aol.com, jjohnson@fclaw.com  
From: **David T. Cox** (coxdavid55@hotmail.com)

Sent: Fri 9/30/11 1:38 PM

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Hello everyone. I do not know how to manage this email. I spent 15 days in the Galapagos Islands, and the experience would take volumes to properly describe. Tuesday, over two weeks ago, I flew from Quito to Baltra Island, where I boarded the sailing yacht "The Beagle" with 12 other passengers, 6 full crew members to service us, and a top-rated biologist-guide, for eight days sailing to the northern and western islands. This route is less often taken by the tours because it requires the minimum 8 days to reach the outer islands and to sail around the large island of Isabela. From the first hour, our routine was two shore trips on various islands daily, about half "dry landings" and half "wet-landings" (meaning the zodiac landing craft would beach in shallow water and we would wade ashore). Only some 70 landing sites are permitted in the entire island park system, and no amenities or improvements exist (with the exception of a couple of wooden staircases to get up over small cliffs). We rarely encountered other boats at our anchors, and only once saw another group at the same landing site. The landings each would consist generally of about 2 to 3 hours of shore time usually involving some hiking inland or along lava incrustated shorelines. Every site had different groupings of bird and wildlife present, often in astonishing number, and very different landscapes, from lush plant growth to arid desert with cactus to endless lava fields (the islands are entirely formed by volcanic activity, some where we traveled active numerous times in the last decade). Between the morning and afternoon shore landings, we spent at least an hour each day snorkeling in clear water (a little chilly this time of year, but we all were provided with shorty wet suits ordered at the outset in precisely our size) near our anchor site. The marine life is equally as astonishing as the land life, and we swam with hundreds of endangered green sea turtles, the only equatorial Galapagos Penguins, the endemic Flightless Cormorants and, of course, the ever present wonderful Marine Iguanas, all (except the turtles) found nowhere else on earth. At sea around the northern side of Isabela we encountered three different species of whales, as well as the ever present dolphins and giant rays which would leap out of the water performing complete flips high in the air.

Despite the hiking and swimming schedule, we all gained weight; our chef, Pedro, was as wide as tall (normally a very good sign in a cook), and the food was excellent and freshly and originally prepared each meal. We ate as a group on deck. The cabins were small, as expected on this size boat, and I shared mine with a French-Canadian who heads the IT department for the Quebec federal government agency for social insurance. Each cabin had private bath. The 13 of us became quite close during the 8 days, and indeed 7 of us remained on Santa Cruz for some time after the voyage and continued to get together.

At our initial island visits (Genovesa and Santiago) we encountered giant colonies of breeding pelagic birds, including the Magnificent and the Great Frigatebirds, the Red-footed, the Blue-footed and the Peruvian Boobies, and various terns, gulls and shearwaters. All islands had populations of the Galapagos Sea Lions and the Galapagos Fur Seals. Huge Marine Iguanas populated almost all shorelines, and could be watched above and under water going out to sea to feed on bottom algae. On the western islands (Isabela and Fernandina), also the youngest, we encountered the Galapagos Penguins and Flightless Cormorants, as well as the largest Galapagos Land Iguanas and the Galapagos Tortoises. On brackish water lagoons appearing as oases in the midst of endless lava fields we found the flamengos. We hiked (after a "Chiva", truck, took us half way) up to the summit of Vulcan Sierra Negra, the largest cratered volcano on the islands in the south of Isabela, to gaze across a 10 kilometer crater lake of hardened lava, which erupted as recently as 4 years ago, and on the way up, in the wet forests we finally encountered the famed Woodpecker Finch, the tool-using bird. Darwin's finches (in all 13 species) were on all islands, though some species are restricted to a single island (the Mangrove Finch restricted to one tiny mangrove patch, with only 60 breeding adults in the world). I managed to photograph 9 of the finch species.

At the end of the cruise, I remained another 8 days on the islands, spending the first 4 days in Puerto Ayora, the largest (maybe 20,000 population) of the 4 human settlements, on Santa Cruz Island. From there I was able to arrange day trips, one to visit the humid and cool highlands where I got to finally photograph my Tree Finches, and wander among dozens of giant Galapagos Tortoises, as well as visit one of the larger lava tubes in the world. Another day I traveled by boat to the small island of Plaza Sur to finally see a number of Cactus Finches. I also spend several hours on more than one occasion at the Darwin Center just outside of town. I thought I had discovered a new species of mantis on the islands, having photographed it in the mouth of a Galapagos Flycatcher (see attached photo). None of the top guides had ever heard of any mantis on the islands, so I spoke with the Development Manager at the Darwin Center who also had never heard of one. Unfortunately, I received yesterday an email from the Darwin Center after they tracked down an account from 100 years ago of a brown mantis on the islands, now named the Galapagos Mantis. I also am corresponding with the center on account of three photos I took of what to me appear to be Green Herons on three different islands; the Darwin Center lists them as hypothetical only, with one possible sighting in 1996. The Darwin Center seems interested in using some of my photos for both their scientific collections, and also has asked permission to use them for promotional purposes.

My final four days were spent on the island of San Cristobal in the east, in the small town of Puerto Baquerizo. The trip from Santa Cruz Island to San Cristobal was on a 30 foot type of fiberglass hulled boat they call "Fibros", outfitted with 3 Yamaha 200 outboards. They rev up two engines at a time, switching as the engines need oil or other service mid-trip, and just fly. Unfortunately, they don't fly high enough, just fast enough, and on the open sea between islands, which is quite rough this time of year, we rocked, rolled and at times went slightly airborne followed by huge crashes down onto the water. It was unnerving and terribly uncomfortable for over 2 hours as we got pounded; many of the passengers got sick on the crossing, having nowhere to go, and cheap little black plastic bags to try and contain their



"output". On San Cristobal I wandered at will out to secluded beaches where Sea Lions were giving birth to young. I also photographed a sequence of shots of a juvenile Buterides heron literally "fishing" dragonflies out of the sky; in 14 minutes it had caught 4 of them, an amazing sight.

I returned to Quito the day before yesterday, and have spent the last two days preparing my trip into the Amazon basin. I leave next Wednesday, to take a bus over a 14,000 foot pass and then dropping into the tropical basin. I already have reserved two weeks in two different jungle lodges reached by boat. The first is in the Cuyabeno Reserve in the north near the border of Columbia, the second in the territory of the Sani Isla tribe which lives on the borders and within the great Yasuni Park. With private guides expert in birds and wildlife, I hope to get some great photos. After those lodges I will travel on south in the basin to Tena, perhaps to arrange further private trips into the jungle. In November I will return to the highlands, and then arrange for trips into the Cloud Forests on the slopes of the Andes. All is going well, but having to pay for everything in cash (many agencies do not accept credit cards, and those that do charge an average 8% fee on top of the bank's already 3% foreign currency fee) keeps me busy running to the ATM machines here almost daily.

I have included a number of photos which seem representative of some of the better sights in the Galapagos. My photos always are captioned, but I think maybe the caption often doesn't show up in most email programs. If anyone wants the names of the creatures in the pictures, let me know. I am having a terrific time, and life really is good right now. Until later. Dave

## Dave Cox in Quito, Ecuador reporting on Galapagos adventures, Fri. Sept. 3

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Sally Lightfoot Crab, Santa Cruz Island, Galapagos

Red-footed Booby, Genovesa,  
Galapagos

Nazca Booby fledgling, Genovesa,  
Galapagos

Warbler Finch (gentalis), Genovesa,  
Galapagos

Red-footed Booby fledgling,  
Genovesa, Galapagos

Magnificent Frigatebird, Punta  
Vicente Roca, Isabela, Galapagos

Green Sea Turtle, Punta Vicente  
Roca, Isabela, Galapagos

Galapagos Flycatcher w rare mantis,  
above Darwin Lake, Isabela,  
Galapagos

Galapagos Land Iguana, Urvina Bay,  
Isabela, Galapagos

American Flamenco, Punto Moreno,  
Isabela, Galapagos

Woodpecker Finch, Sierra Negra,  
Isabela, Galapagos

Swallow-tailed Gull w baby at nest,  
South Plaza, Galapagos

Galapagos Tortoise, Rancho Premiso,  
Santa Cruz, Galapagos

Blue-footed Booby, Puerto Baquerizo  
Moreno, San Cristobal, Galapagos

Marine Iguana, La Loberia, San  
Cristobal, Galapagos

Galapagos Sea Lion pup, La Loberia,  
San Cristobal,



Sally Lightfoot Crab



Red-footed Booby



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Nazca Booby fledgeling



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Warbler Finch



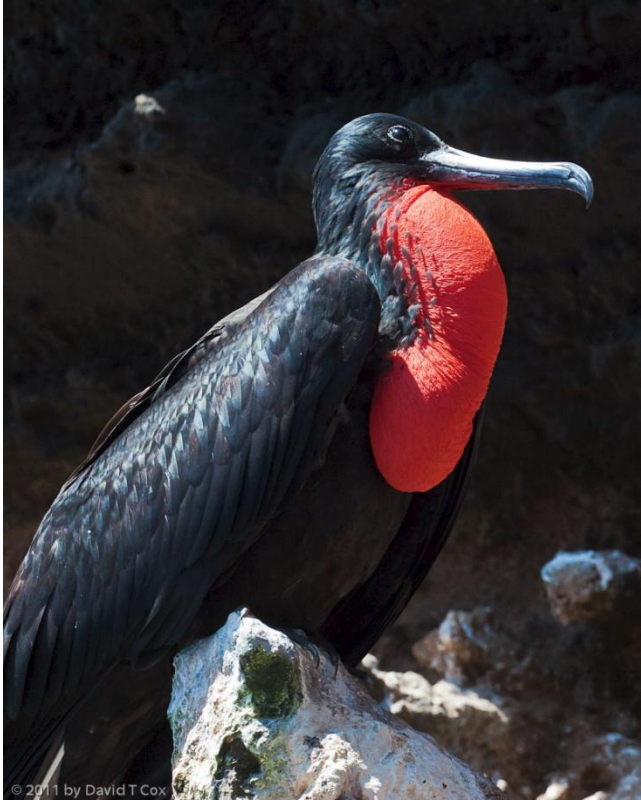
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Red-footed Booby fledgling



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The Beagle



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Magnificent Frigatebird



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Green Sea Turtle



Galapagos Flycatcher w Mantis



Land Iguana



Galapagos Penguins



American Flamingo



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Woodpecker Finch



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Swallow-tailed Gull





Galapagos Tortoise



Rowena, Alana & me at Rock,



Puerto Ayora

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Blue-footed Booby



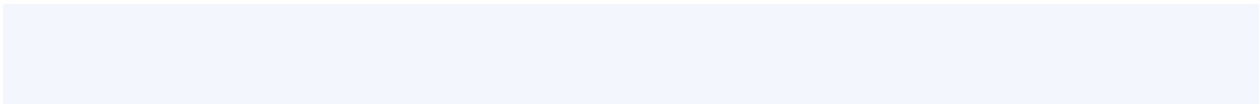
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Marine Iguana



Galapagos Sealion

- Dave Cox in Coca, Amazonia, Ecuador, Oct. 14, 2011



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Sent: Fri 10/14/11 4:30 AM

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Hello everyone. I have just a little time as I am spending a day cleaning up and drying out (with AC) in the oil town of Coca in northern Amazonia (the Amazon Basin) of Ecuador. A little over a week ago I spent 7 hours on a bus, first chugging over an almost 14,000 foot pass in the Andes above Quito, and then dropping about 13,000 feet into the Amazon Basin to the oil town of Lago Agrio. From there I was picked up and driven another 120 kilometers east to the bridge over the Cuyabeno River, where a motorized wood canoe took me and 3 others another 2 hours east through the forest to the Laguna Grande in the middle of the Cuyabeno Reserve, a large rainforest park with much flooded lowlands. There I spent 7 days at the Cuyabeno Lodge, a rustic set of wood cabins, with little to no screening, cold showers with dark water, and large numbers of room visitors with 6 legs, 8 legs and four legs (insects, arachnids and tree frogs). As I was setting up my room a large tree frog leapt from one wall using the side of my face to reach the opposite wall; gave me quite a start, as it was sort of a large wet slap. Upon arrival at the lodge, the boat had to stop some 300 meters out, as the water level was very low at the time; we had to do a "wet" landing, which meant off came the shoes, on went the 16 inch rubber boots (with which I lived for the next week), and a wade through water, then mud, then up the hill with all luggage.

As one would expect, it was cool most early mornings, but hot otherwise and always just at the saturation point for humidity. I never did dry off; immediately after a daily cold shower, my clean clothes would be wet within minutes. After my first 2 hour hike through the rain forest I had a quarter inch of water in both rubber boots just from sweat dripping down the pant legs. The boots were necessary pretty much everywhere, as one constantly needs to walk through standing water and mud up to 10 inches deep. A couple of people had the misfortune of stepping a few inches off the trail and going down almost to their hips in the mud; this required assistance from the guide to get out, as it was similar to going down in quicksand; it was rather messy for those unlucky ones. Because it is the "dry" season (it only rained about a quarter of the time), the mosquito numbers were way down, a huge plus as the mosquito nets did not

reach the mattresses and so could not be tucked in or secured. That pretty much sums up the basics of the discomforts.

The area has a good variety of wildlife. I saw many wonderful birds; getting good photos was far more difficult than I had anticipated. I had forgotten how truly dark it is under the forest canopy. Much of the time I simply was unable to get sufficient light to take any reasonable telephoto pictures. Furthermore, most of the birds remain high in the trees or behind dense foliage. Nevertheless, I was rewarded with several dozen new species, especially enjoying the new herons. We encountered 7 different species of monkey, including the world's smallest primate, the pygmy marmoset, about the size of a mouse. I had forgotten how small almost all new world primates are, but marveled at the different faces.

I did a couple of night runs in the boat and a couple of night walks, using my newly acquired Fenix LD40 light which puts out a powerful spotlight (the guide's lights were inadequate to really see any detail other than for objects within a few yards). I got some wonderful night bug and frog photos, and a couple of extreme close encounters (5 feet from the boat) with 10 -12 foot black caimans at the shorelines. I had a small but adequate flash, and found the Fenix light sufficient to be able to focus the camera even at 50 to 60 feet.

The second full day we visited an indigenous village, memorable mostly for the pouring rain we endured for over an hour going and upon return; my poncho kept the rain off, but condensation on the inside dribbled around me. At the village they had a tame woolly monkey which had a marvelous relationship with one of the dogs; the two spent a fair amount of time "wrestling", each trying to grab the other's legs to bowl it over. I never have seen such interaction. The monkey was caked with mud, and almost constantly was harassing us by trying to climb up our legs or grab objects. It finally succeeded in pulling my hat off and thoroughly mudding it.

I spent the last three days as the only guest at the lodge, and so had the guide and boat driver all to myself to go when and where I pleased for viewing wildlife (a big plus for photography, even if a little lonely). The rains from the second day apparently were much heavier upstream, for by the third day, within a period of hours, the lagoon filled with over half a meter of additional water permitting better and closer landings at the lodge.

The day before yesterday I traveled back to Lago Agrio, and from there came by bus south to Coca. Both towns were born just a few decades ago after the discovery of large amounts of oil here in the Amazon. Both towns are rather ugly affairs, and the paved roads between and around them for over 100 kilometers are lined with ugly oil pipelines. The roads, however, have opened up areas of the Amazon Basin for the few lodges and camps that now permit people like me to visit the wildlife. Today I will be picked up by someone from the Sani Lodge, owned and operated by the indigenous "Sani" tribe, and located about 60 kilometers down the Rio Napo on a small tributary river. I will spend 6 nights there, hoping to see much additional

wildlife. After that, I will travel on south through Amazonia, and perhaps try some short jungle trips around Tena and Misahualli.

Later, Dave.

# Dave Cox in Coca, Amazonia, Ecuador, Oct. 14, 2011

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Tree Frog, Cuyabeno, Ecuador

me in Cuyabeno, Ecuador

Rufescent Tiger-heron,  
Cuyabeno, Ecuador

Orange-winged Amazon,  
Cuyabeno, Ecuador

Huatzin, Cuyabeno, Ecuador

Common Potoo, Cuyabeno,  
Ecuador

White-handed Monkey,  
Cuyabeno Lodge, Ecuador

Bat Falcon, Cuyabeno, Ecuador

Fiery Topaz female, Cuyabeno,  
Ecuador

fresh water turtle,  
Cuyabeno, Ecuador

Laguna Grande, Cuyabeno,  
Ecuador

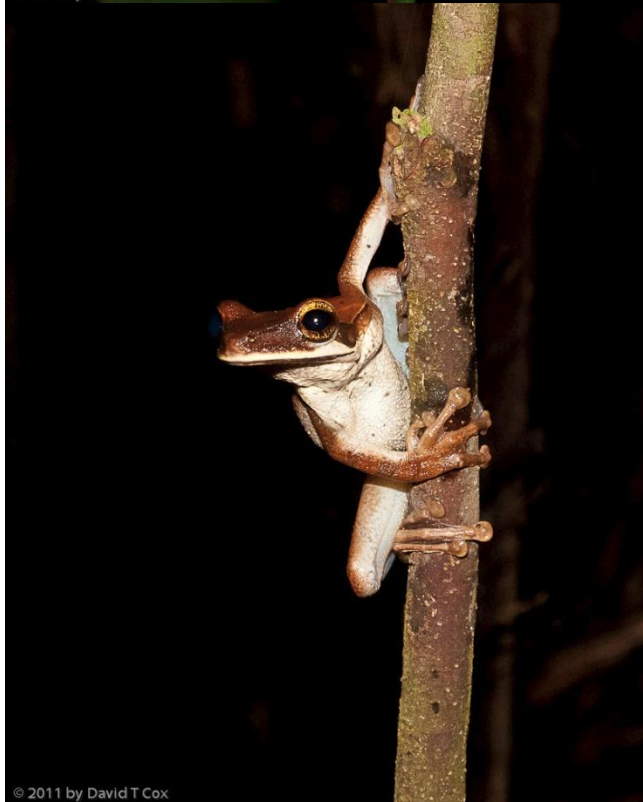
Black CaraCara, Cuyabeno,  
Ecuador

Black Caiman, Cuyabeno,  
Ecuador

Milk-face Monkey, Cuyabeno,  
Ecuador

Two-toed Sloth,  
Ecuador

Squirrel Monkey, Coca, Ecuador





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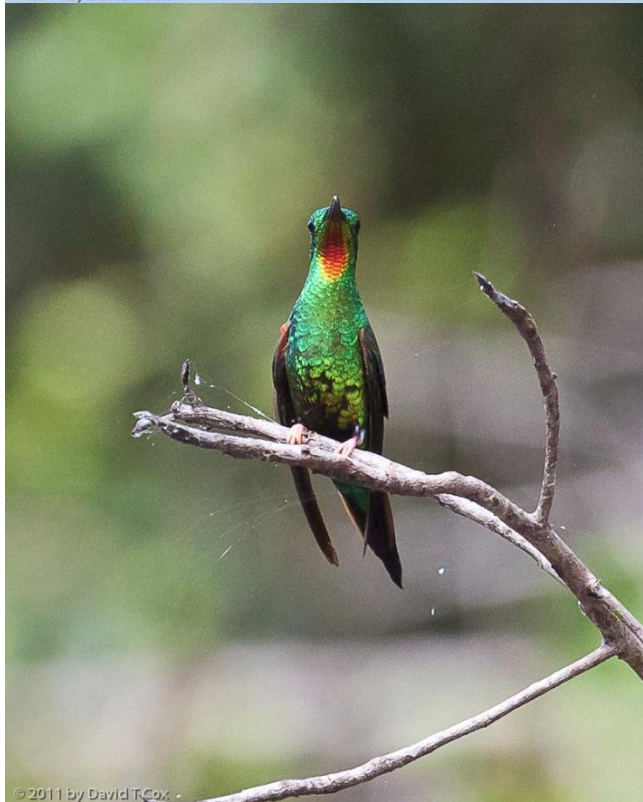


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- Dave Cox Reporting on Yasuni Park from Tena, Ecuador, Oct. 23, 2011

David T. Cox



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Hello everyone. From Coca, about 9 days ago, I traveled what should have been 3 hours down the Rio Napo by a large wooden, powered, canoe. The Napo is a large tributary (about a mile across) of the Amazon, but is low this time of year. We constantly had to recross the river to find channels deep enough to pass; we got stuck on one under-water mud bank, and it took 20 minutes, and 6 of the Sani-Isla men traveling in the boat to get out and push, to free us. Half an hour later the motor caught on fire, and we limped down river for almost 5 hours. At the exit to the Sani Lodge, we hiked on an elevated wood plank walkway about half a mile through the rain forest, then did the final 15 minute passage on a black-water stream through the forest by hand paddled canoe. The lodge is located on a beautiful black water lake deep in primary rain forest. It is on 160 square kilometers of land owned by the Sani-Isla Community of about 500 indigenous Indians, and the lodge is owned and operated by the Sani. It is adjacent to the Yasuni National Park, the largest "protected" area of Amazonia in Ecuador.

I had a large rustic room ("rustic" is always the euphemism meaning lots of rough wood, thatched roof, openings for plenty of bug life, cold-water showers, etc), and enjoyed meals in a large thatched dining area with the occasional other guest. This definitely is the slow time of year; I think I mentioned I spent the last 3 days at Cuyabeno as the sole guest of that lodge, while at Sani there always were at least 2 other people. I had my own private guide for the week, Carlos, a Sani-Isla member, who was the specialist in birds. He had an absolutely amazing ability to identify even the rarest birds either by distant sighting or simply by their vocalizations. I never caught him being wrong, very unlike my guide at Cuyabeno. He also had digital recordings of all the roughly 500 bird species, and we successfully called in a number of birds. We spent several of the days traveling to a 115 foot tower the tribe has built up to a wooden platform near the top of a giant kapok tree in primary forest. It overlooks a vast swath of forest tree tops. Although we encountered a fair number of rare and lovely birds, I must confess the experience did not quite live up to expectations for photography; besides the persistent lack of adequate lighting, with most birds being viewed at huge distances, I also encountered lens problems with my telephoto lens, of the same nature as I already had paid Canon \$400 for repair less than a year ago. Very frustrating, having to nurse the lens to focus, and having the internal motor cause it to jump each time the shutter button is pushed. I will just have to live with the problem for the rest of the trip; after that it seems about time for something new.



We did not encounter as much rain in the Yasuni area as we had at Cuyabeno, and I was absolutely delighted never having to put on a pair of rubber boots. However, it was equally hot and humid and uncomfortable; I realized much of the reason for the persistent discomfort in the afternoons was the complete lack of air movement. Not even the slightest twitches to tree leaves. I would have paid dearly for a fan and either electricity or personel to power it. At night I did walks around camp discovering the countless huge tarantulas that seem to live in holes at the roots of every large tree. The fifth day my guide and I traveled into Yasuni Park to two exceptional "parrot licks", which are clay deposits with special dietary advantages for parrots. Apparently a number of the fruit seeds they eat are somewhat toxic with high acid content, and the parrots counter this intake by daily converging on specialized clay deposits to "lick" the clay which neutralizes the seed toxins. Each of the two parrot licks attracted exactly 4 species of parrots, for a total of 8 species at the two licks. The parrots only converge at a certain hour (different at each lick) and for just a short period. During that period the licks are alive with hundreds of screeching parrots. At the lick deep in the rain forest, prior to the arrival of the parrots, I was treated to a visit by a large herd of peccaries (they look somewhat like pigs), apparently also to consume the clay.

Three days ago I returned upriver to Coca, and traveled the next day by third class bus on south to Tena, a jungle town NOT comprised of oil workers, and slightly higher in elevation (1800 ft), so delightfully it has breezes. I am unwinding here for a couple of days trying to catch up on computer work on the photos. I am drinking cheap red wine that costs twice what it is worth, and eating fairly well. I am hoping to find a guide to show me what are supposed to be a number of nearby locations with petroglyphs (claimed by some to be 2,000 years old), something I have not encountered south of Mexico before. I also hope to spend a little time traveling around the rivers to further excercise my malfunctioning camera lens. After that I once again will ascend into the high central valleys of the Andes. I have included a number of photos which should have captions. Later. Dave

## Dave Cox Reporting on Yasuni Park from Tena, Ecuador, 23, 2011

Many-banded Aracari, Sani, Ecuador

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Capucino Monkey, Sani, Ecuador

White-winged Swallow, Sani, Ecuador

Amazonian Barred-Woodcreeper, Sani, Ecuador

Amazonian White-tailed Trogon, Sani, Ecuador

Chestnut-fronted Tanager, Sani, Ecuador

White-chinned Jacamar, Sani,  
Ecuador

Pygmy Kingfisher, Sani, Ecuador

Tarantula, Sani, Ecuador

Mealy Amazon, Yellow-crowned  
Amazon, Dusky-headed Parakeet  
& Blue-headed Parrot, river side  
parrot lick, Anangu, Yasuni,  
Ecuador

Cobalt-winged  
Scarlet-shouldered  
jungle parrot  
Yasuni, Ecuador

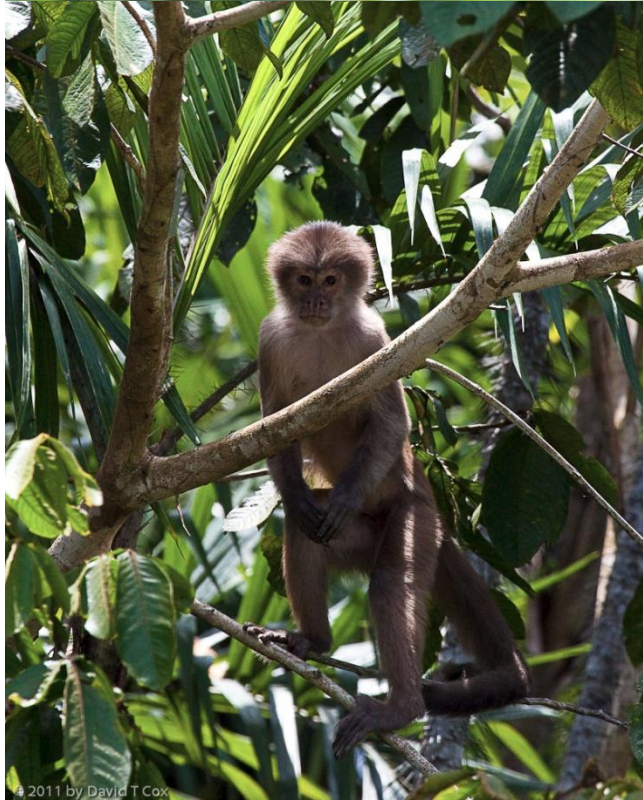
Scarlet McCaw, Jungle Parrot  
Lick, Yasuni, Ecuador

Blue-grey Tanager, Tena,  
Ecuador

Bananaquit, Tena, Ecuador



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- Dave Cox in Cuenca, Ecuador, Sat. Nov. 5, 2011

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- David T. Cox



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Hello everyone. It has been a while since my last missive from Tena; I have done considerable travel and for a number of days have been without ready internet access. My last 3 days in Tena were cloudy and it rained much of the time, pretty much dimming my prospects for visiting nearby Misahualli and for doing much bird photography. From Tena I traveled by bus to Puyo and then up into a river valley climbing to Banos which sits at about 6,000 feet. The trip passed a number of waterfalls, but it rained much of the time so the views weren't great. One memorable moment was when a taxi heading the other way was stopped over on our side of the two lane road. The bus started to pass the taxi, had a truck over-take us on the left, and the bus driver hit the brakes. We skidded on the rain-wet road head-on into the taxi, pretty much destroying its front end. The bus just had some light bumper and headlight damage. No-one was hurt, but lots of harsh words passed on the highway. I used the stop to take a much needed bathroom break (there are no bathrooms available for men on any buses I have been on; some of the "deluxe" buses have a locked bathroom, but keys are only available, if at all, for women). I expected all the passengers to immediately exit the bus and disappear; in Mexico that normally is the reaction to any accident as the police, upon arrival, will deter any witnesses, often for days if the accident was serious. In Ecuador, however, no one ran. Indeed, the drivers exchanged various information, and even though the taxi was definitely in need of a tow, the bus then continued its way on to Banos without waiting for police.

Banos is a picturesque town sitting in a river canyon bowl, ringed completely on north and south by towering canyon walls with waterfalls. The mountain wall to the south, just a hundred yards from my hotel, circles more than 180 degrees around the town, and rises about 1,000 feet in almost vertical cliffs to a shelf above, then climbs another 8,000 feet to the summit of the Tungurahua Volcano, the most active volcano now in Ecuador. After 80 years of dormancy, it erupted in late 1999; Banos and neighboring villages were forcibly evacuated for 3 months, making over 20,000 people homeless. In early 2000, 5,000 of the displace Banos citizens, using shovels and rocks, forcibly retook Banos from the military that had occupied the area, and as the volcano had quieted down, normalcy resumed for a while. In 2006 the Volcano erupted

again, shooting ash 6 miles into the air, and producing pyroclastic ash flows down the western flanks of the volcano wiping out 3 villages; most of the people had again been evacuated, but a number were killed. Banos, just 8 kilometers away, was spared. Although the volcano now is quiet, some risk exists with travel to Banos. I twice climbed about 1,300 feet up the mountain to the north to get views of the volcano and banos sitting in the bowl below. I have included one picture.

I had a nice B&B in Banos, enjoyed great breakfasts, and got pictures of three new hummingbirds (2 included); the tiny Black-tailed Trainbearer has a tail 3 times its body length. Banos is famous not just for its views, but for its hot thermal springs (baths or "banos"), powered by the volcanic activity. The thermal waters, waterfalls and Basilica all are dedicated to Nuestra Senora de Agua Santa (Our Virgin of Holy Water), who is credited with an amazing number of miraculous life saves for those who cried out her name as they were about to be killed. Indeed, the Basilica is filled with huge paintings depicting these accounts together with the written account and where it is recorded. A shortened version of a common account would be "Senior so-and-so on 14<sup>th</sup> of October, 1929, was riding his horse across the bridge over the Rio Pastaza when the bridge swayed and he and his horse plunged 70 feet into the gorge; as he plunged, Senior so-and-so cried out for help to Nuestra Senora de Agua Santa, and was spared, though the horse was never seen again." Every account I read, and it was many, seemed to require the person to remember to verbally cry out to the holy lady to be spared. There exist no accounts of those who failed to cry out, and so their fates are not recounted, and assumed to be tragic. I have included one picture of a painting. Around the cloister of the Basilica is a museum with a small archaeological collection, and a hugely entertaining collection of stuffed animals and birds in what one supposes was an effort at a natural history display. Never have I seen such bad taxidermy, although the Natural History Museum In Maputo, Mozambique certainly deserves an honorable mention. Species identification was usually not possible. Rough Guide described it as "a collection of stuffed Ecuadorian wildlife put together by someone with a very poor grasp of anatomy." I have included more than one pic.

From Banos I traveled by bus to Riobamba, which lies south-west of Banos just around the western flanks of the volcano; all the guide books, my hotel, and indeed people at the bus station told me travel had to go to the northwest to Ambato, and then circle back south to Riobamba, because the road around the Tungurahua Volcano still was wiped out. Well, I got a "de paso" bus (meaning it originates elsewhere and just passes through, usually stopping on the highway for boarding passengers) from Puyo; to my amazement it turned off the Ambato highway and proceeded directly south around the western flanks of Tungurahua. We traveled about 10 miles of rough dirt road just bladed through 3 areas of pyroclastic ash flow. It was like passing through steep down-hill rivers of grey deep ash, covered with nothing but thousands of baby carriage-size boulders. Could have been a Martian slope. No signs of any hamlets that once had existed there. A little spooky to realize that the devastation was only 5 years old, and the volcano almost certainly has not finished its current period of activity.

Riobamba is a sizeable, rather ugly, city, sitting just a short distance from the fabulous Chimborazo Volcano, at over 20,000 feet perpetually snow-covered, and the "highest" mountain in the world. I assume an explanation is in order; it is all about point of view. Until just over 200 years ago Chimborazo was considered the tallest mountain in the world measured from sea level; after Europeans explored the Himalayas and further south in the Andes, Chimborazo eventually was relegated to a spot of only 99<sup>th</sup> highest in the world, but that is measured from sea level. Modern measurements of the earth now realize the earth bulges slightly at the equator; indeed the bulge is about 10,000 feet, or a mile and half, relative to the earth's diameter of about 8,000 miles; meaning the bulge is only about 1/50<sup>th</sup> of 1 percent of the diameter. Seems a trifle. Ah, but Chimborazo lies practically on the equator, and Everest and the other giants do not. This means that measured from the center of the earth, Chimborazo is higher than Everest and all other mountains. In other words, if you encircled the earth with a collapsible sphere, then gradually reduced the sphere in size, the first point on earth it would touch would be the summit of Chimborazo Volcano, not Mt Everest. You can tell I enjoy some (not many) different viewpoints.

I traveled to Riobamba because it is supposed to be the start point for a round-trip tourist train ride down the famous "Nariz del Diablo", only to find out the train tracks from Riobamba to Alausi have been out of commission for almost a year for repairs, and the train now starts from Alausi, just above the Nariz del Diablo. The next day I got the 6am bus to Alausi, and arrived in time to get the last seat available on the 11am train. This is a very short section of the 19<sup>th</sup> century rail line from the coast to Quito, none of which is in service anymore except for a couple of short tourist runs. "El Nariz del Diablo" means the The Devil's Nose, and is a rock face along a river valley that the original train line had to surmount. The turn-of-the century engineering to construct the line garnered the accolade "the most difficult railway in the world", and indeed still is called this; it is a marvel. The entire track length from Alausi at the upper end of the canyon to Sibambe at the lower end is just 12 kilometers, but runs at a constant 1 in 18 grade, very steep for a railway. At the Devil's Nose, the engineering solution to getting up the almost vertical cliff was to carve out of the rock a series of zigzag switchbacks, so the train would go forward up the cliff face for a kilometer, then reverse directions with a switch on the tracks and continue up the other direction. Pretty spectacular. I got the last ticket for that day because the three old wooden rail cars were filled with a French tour group. The round-trip took only 2 ½ hours with a 45 minute stop at the station at Sibambe for a sandwich and local Andean dancers.

From Alausi I took another early bus (again 6am) on Wednesday to Cuenca; I found out just 2 days before arrival that my arrival coincided with the start of the largest national holiday period, Dia de los Muertos coupled with Dia de los Santos, further coupled with Cuenca's celebration of Independence Day. I feel fortunate to have found a room, the very last one in a small centrally located hotel, requiring that I pay for the entire 4 day holiday period up front (no problem). Cuenca easily is the best of the colonial cities in Ecuador, with an easily navigable central historic district that, unlike Quito, coincides with all the best hotels and restaurants, as well as booking and travel agencies. Almost every block has a church. The view down the river, with the great colonial mansions showing their back-sides down the small embankment, is

wonderful. There have been parades down the street 50 feet from my hotel door every day. The town is packed with Ecuadorian tourists. The only foreigners I see seem to be numbers of young American students living here to study Spanish. I have visited one lovely private collection of archaeological pre-Columbian artifacts, which rivals the collection I visited in Quito, and hope to visit another on Monday.

I have purchased an air ticket for Tuesday back to Quito to avoid the roughly 11 hour bus ride (remember - no toilets for men). In Quito I hope to make initial arrangements for visiting 1 or more private lodges in the cloud forests around Mindo (west of Quito) for more bird photography. I also expect to visit the highland colonial town of Otavalo. Later. Dave



Green Kingfisher, Tena, Napo, Ecuador

# Dave Cox in Cuenca, Ecuador

## Sat. Nov. 5, 2011

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painting of miracle, Santuario Nuestra Snr de Agua Santa, Banos, Ecuador



Napo Sabrewing, 400m above Banos, Ecuador



Black-tailed Trainbearer, 400m above Banos, Ecuador



Sparkling Violetear, Banos, Ecuador



badly stuffed wildlife, Basilica Museo, Ecuador



badly stuffed wildlife, Banos Basilica Museo, Ecuador



view of Vulcan Tungurahua over Banos, Ecuador



Chimborazo from bus from Riobamba to Alausi, Ecuador



photographer on train ride from Alausi down Nariz del Diablo, Ecuador



view of Iglesia from window, Orquidea, Cuenca, Ecuador



view of Barranca down Rio Tomebamba,



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- Dave Cox Reporting from Quito on Cloud Forest & Paramo Birding, Thurs., Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 24, 2011

Photos | 11/24/11

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Hello everyone and belated happy Thanksgiving to those from the US. It has been well over 2 weeks since last I wrote, as I have been mostly without internet access, and I will try to compress a large amount of travel info. I have started out each day from my various lodging between 4am and 6am for birding (not really "birding," but photographing birds). I left Quito Thursday two weeks ago and traveled first to Bellavista, a private reserve located between 7,000 and 8,000ft in the cloud forests on the western slopes of Pichincha Volcano (which is the volcano immediately to the west of Quito). The weather and vegetation there greatly reminded me of Kodaikanal, India where I went to boarding school. These cloud forests get more rainfall than the Amazon basin; the hillsides are exceptionally steep and thickly covered with exotic elephant leaved plants, creepers and knarled trees covered in bromeliads, orchids and moss; the ground is always damp and spongy when off the rocky slopes. The light is always muted and actually quite dark. By afternoon of every day it becomes foggy. It is in these forests on both slopes of the Andes that the bird life is richest in Ecuador. I spent several days just walking the trails of Bellavista with their private bird guides. The room at the lodge was "rustic" (see my last email for definition). The meals were exceptional. The bird-life was phenomenal, but photography terrifically difficult; indeed, for bird photos, Ecuador has been more difficult than any country on earth I have so far visited. In the forests, where most birds reside, the canopy is too high, the branches and leaves are too thick, the birds move incessantly and the light always is too low (a photographer's lament). It is hard to decide on favorite birds, but number one for me was the tiny Purple-throated Woodstar, one of 5 species of hummingbirds which are the smallest of all hummingbirds and so the smallest birds in the world; its body, with feathers puffed, is the size of the last joint of your thumb viewed from the side. With an equally tiny bill, and tail which it raises when feeding, it is just precisely the size of most bumblebees I have seen. It makes a loud deep buzzing sound, exactly like bumblebees, and approaches flowers very slowly. It could be mistaken for a bumblebee but for the male's incredible iridescent purple throat and green back. The Bellavista highlights also included the spectacularly colored Toucan Barbet.

On two days I paid additional for private transportation and guide to a couple of "nearby" special places of interest; one day visiting two other lodges on private reserves (Alambi and Mindo Lomo), at different elevations from Bellavista on the same slope, for completely different hummingbird species, and the other day traveling to the private Refuge of Angel Paz, famous amongst birders for being the first person ever to lure out of the deepest forest several

rarely seen species of antpittas. I spent 5 hours with Angel himself, first at his Cock-of-the-Rock lek (a "lek" is a special spot deep in the forest where the male birds gather at about 6am every morning to display and call to attract females - they do not often succeed), followed by wandering through the cloud forest trails to see antpittas (the Giant and Ochre-breasted) and the seldom seen Dark-backed Wood-Quail and gorgeous Orange-breasted Fruiteaters.

From Bellavista I traveled to the town of Mindo, probably the most famous birding center of Ecuador. There I hired one of two different private guides and necessary transportation each day to visit the lower cloud forests above Mindo, the private Milpe Reserve below the cloud forests, and a long day into the Chontal Valley to see the two only known oilbird caves on the western slopes, both of which are on private property. The first cave required climbing down a series of three incredibly rickety, private built, wood ladders, through splashing waterfalls, while attached to a harness and cable held by hand above by the tiny, approximately 60 year old, native lady proprietor; the oilbirds are extremely rare birds, related to Nightjars, which roost during the day, and nest, in these dark caves.

The Mindo highlights were the many species of colorful toucans and tanagers, and the Bronze-winged Parrot. In keeping with prior reports I must report on the aggravating and unusual biting insect life around Mindo; along with the incessant gnats, which perpetually buzz around the eyes and ears, are very small biting black flies, with little piercers at the front end. In the process of constantly being alert to photo opportunities, the bugs are ignored, but these flies leave behind the most incredible itch spots on the hands and arms; the itches still are going strong after a week. Most unusual, they leave tiny prick wounds which form tiny scabs which remain visible as long as the itch, helping distinguish these unwelcome insect bites from those of the more common mosquitoes and sand fleas with which they compete. I also was visited in the shower one day by a marvelous, hairy and fast-jumping 2 and ½ inch huntsman spider; it wandered onto the shower curtain by my face as I was shampooing my hair. Made the rinse rather eventful. We - the owner, actually - later successfully captured and released it outside after a great deal of yelling (by the owner) and jumping (by both spider and owner).

From Mindo I returned to Quito as the base for two more days with private guide and transportation to two high elevation reserves. The first was the foundation owned Yanacocha, on the north-western slopes of Pichincha Volcano, at 11,600ft. At this elevation there still is cloud forest, but with smaller trees, and even greater sized elephant-leaved plants. Again, due to the elevation change, even though on the same mountain slopes, the species of birds entirely different than lower. Here I finally got to photograph the marvelous Sword-billed Hummingbird, with a bill as long as its body. Also, two new species of highland antpittas, the Rufous and the Tawny. Yesterday we traveled higher still, onto the Paramo, which exists on the sides of the higher volcanoes, above tree line but below the snow and glaciers. We traveled to the slopes of Antisana Volcano, into what now is a national reserve. The ground is covered with large grasses, frost covered in the morning, and the small streams from the glaciers are lined with small flowering bushes. Once again, entirely new species of birds exist at this very high elevation; my GPS put us at 4066m, or about 13,400 feet. Walking even on the level got the

lungs working hard; with the slightest hill to climb it would start to feel like jogging. With the glacier covered triple peak of Antisana on one side and the perfect cone of Cotopaxi Volcano just to the south-west, it was a photogenic place. We saw one Andean Condor fly overhead, and on a small lake I photographed three new duck species and the rather rare Silvery Grebe. The Paramo was quite densely populated with the Corunculated Caracara, large handsome birds of prey, with orange faces, which spend their time walking about on the ground like giant chickens searching for grubs. Also, in large flocks on the ground, are the black headed Andean Gulls, beautiful gulls which have forsaken the sea, and indeed any body of water, to live above tree line wandering on the ground, like the Caracaras, searching for food. At one point as I was trying to approach the gulls, about 8 took off and came circling right above my head screaming at me; it was a good photo opportunity.

I have spent part of my Thanksgiving day here in Quito arranging for one last fling at bird photography; I have gotten permission for entrance to two private cloud-forest reserves on the eastern slopes of the Andes, one at about 4,000ft (San Isidro) and the other at about 8,000ft (Guango), and private transportation for this Saturday to visit both. Tomorrow I will spend in the Centro Historico of Quito again, revisiting the Casa Alabado, the private archaeological collection I wrote of a couple of months ago; their are a number of exhibits for which I need to get proper identification for the individual pieces I already have photographed. Sunday I may go to a special Thanksgiving Day buffet at the Quito Hotel where I may finally get the turkey I am craving, but missing, today. Tuesday I return to the the US. I have included a number of favorite photos, which are but a tiny selection of what I have taken; all should be captioned. All is well but for lingering itches. Later. Dave



Purple-throated Woodstar, Bellavista, Ecuador

## Dave Cox Reporting from Quito on Cloud Forest & Paramo Birding, Thurs., Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 24, 2011

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Masked Trogon, Bellavista, Ecuador



White-whiskered Hermit, Alambi, Ecuador



White-necked Jacoban, Alambi, Ecuador



Western Emerald, Alambi, Ecuador



Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Paz Refugio, Ecuador



Giant Antpitta, Angel Paz Refugio, Ecuador



Brown Inca, Angel Paz Refugio, Ecuador



Booted Rackettail, Angel Paz Refugio, Ecuador



Orange-breasted Fruiteater by Angel Paz at his Refugio, Ecuador



Gorgeted Sunbird, Ecuador



Toucan Barbet, Bellavista, Ecuador



Masked Flowerpiercer, Bellavista, Ecuador



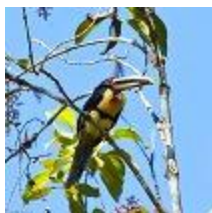
Fawn-breasted Tanager, Mindo, Ecuador



Oilbird, Cave 2, Chontal, Ecuador



Green-crowned Motmot, Milpe, Ecuador



Pale-mandibled (Collared) Aracari, Mindo, Ecuador



Choco Toucan, Mindo, Ecuador



Rufous Antpitta, Yanacocha, Ecuador



Golden-breasted Puffleg, Yanacocha, Ecuador



Sword-billed Hummingbird, Yanacocha, Ecuador



Carunculated Caracara, Antisana, Ecuador

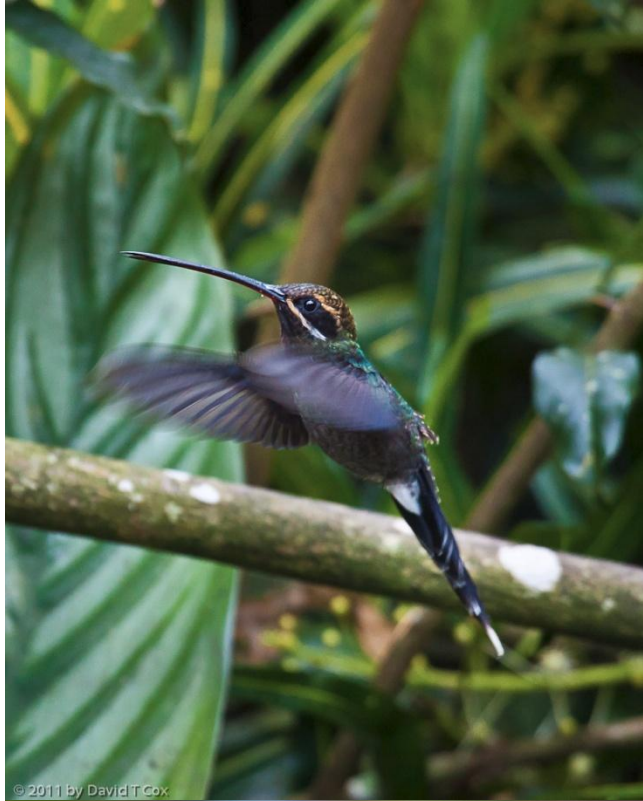


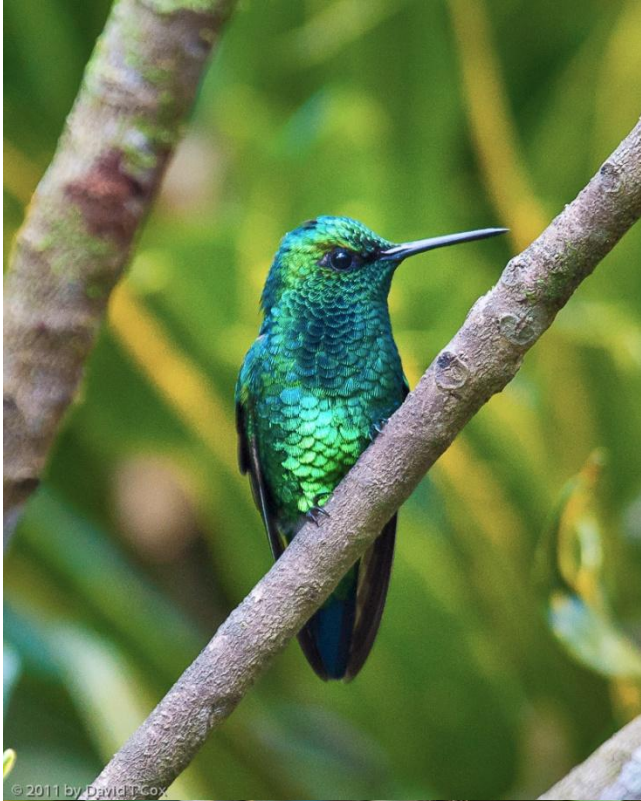


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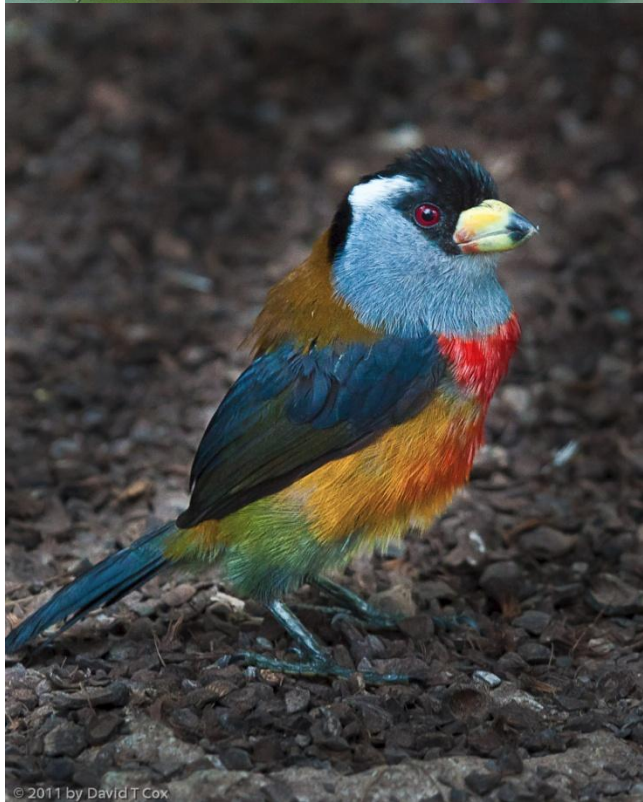
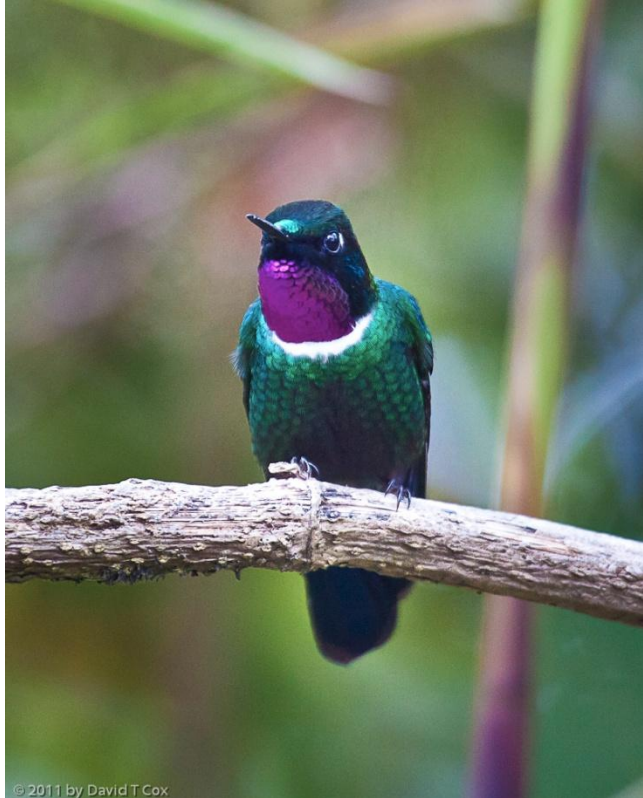
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Email never sent because Hotmail would not send Skydrive Album

Dave Cox back in Tucson, Arizona, Dec. 17, 2011

Hello everyone. This email is belated because Hotmail has refused to work to send emails with photo albums for two weeks. I left Quito around midnight three weeks ago Monday for the 15 hours of travel back to Tucson. My last several days in Ecuador were a little more eventful than I had hoped, and, having little else to report, I will relate some of the ever present dangers of tourism in large cities in third world countries.

I revisited the private archaeological museum, Casa del Alabado, in the Quito centro historico to complete the identification of artifacts I had previously photographed. After some lunch I was walking north on a busy street, when suddenly several people behind me called to me and noted someone had squirted an ugly yellow mixture of something all over my backpack. I had heard about these theft scams; the target is so shaken by being hit with the smelly mixture, that while trying to clean it off the thieves pick the pockets and snatch the camera and bag. So I immediately went to a public building entrance, out of the crowd, and was very pleased to note the backpack was not opened, and my wallet was intact. One of the men who had alerted me, dressed in a suit, offered tissues; a well dressed woman also approached asking if I had lost anything in the attempted robbery, and offered some paper towels to help clean my back. Both gently insisted I put the backpack and camera down on the steps while they tried to clean my back. At that point I removed my hat and noted it had nothing on it; a BIG-RED alert went off in my mind as I simultaneously realized that (i) my camera strap had nothing on it, the back pack completely covered the rest of my back, SO - there could not be a mess on my back under the backpack, AND (ii) these two well dressed people just happened to conveniently have huge packs of tissues and paper towels!! I immediately grabbed my camera and backpack off the ground, over their protests that my back was covered, and then watched as they disappeared just as the building guard rushed out to help me, after others alerted him to what was happening. That is when I realized the theft does not occur during the confusion immediately after being squirted, it is during the clean-up operation afterwards when you are now so thankful nothing has been stolen. And of course, my back had nothing on it - just the backpack had taken the hit. I had just very narrowly missed having the backpack and camera snatched, and my wallet lifted, during the "back-cleaning". I was allowed use of the building's interior bathroom to clean my backpack (the cleaning lady sprayed it over and over with disinfectant, alarming me as to exactly what she thought was in the ugly yellow mixture). Walking north to clear my head, 30 minutes later, a well dressed woman spoke from behind alerting me that I was covered in something awful, and she produced a wad of paper towels to start cleaning me as a man in a suit hurried up with tissues. I looked at the back of my pants - I had been HIT a second time! I grabbed some towels, and rather bluntly asked them to move away and stop trying to touch me. Whether they were part of the same extended group as the first, and had been following me all this way, or this was an entirely unrelated hit, I will never know; it is abundantly clear that my Canon 5D MkII camera turned me into an irresistible target. I was thoroughly angered by the time I got back to the hotel, but felt lucky I had survived the "test" by keeping my head in the nick of time.

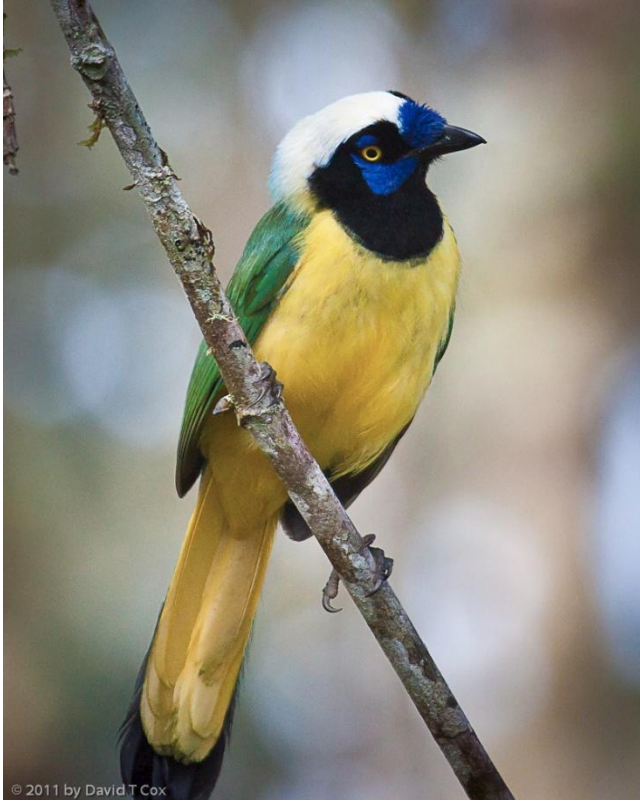
I also had several attempted pickpockets, all in or close to Quito. The one which almost succeeded was on my bus from Quito to Lago Agrio. A man initially sat beside me (I had the window seat), but kept moving to other seats periodically. As the bus came for a brief stop in a town, he quickly moved back into the seat beside me, where he had left a bag, and started excitedly speaking incomprehensively, and

motioning that I should recline my seat back. I declined, and he got more excited, while smiling, but urgently motioning that I must put my seat back, he leaned over me and reached across for the release to put the seat back; that angered me, and I grabbed his other hand which was across my leg, only to find it was under my jacket which was on my lap and into my now opened pack which was at my feet. I pulled his empty hand out, and he jumped up and quickly departed out the bus door. Again, the modus operandi here is to first completely confuse the target and deflect all attention away from personal belongings.

And the Quito taxis, sometimes metered, occasionally love to "forget" to reset the meter when previous passengers depart just as you, the obvious tourist, get in; so you get a \$9 meter charge for a \$2 ride. I had learned the rates (or asked others in advance) so never acquiesced to these scams. I did, however, have some lovely and lively arguments, which always ended when the driver realized I spoke Spanish, I knew the correct rate, and I really was calling the police (this scam is just a version of the Mexico Pemex gas station scam, where when they have waiting cars in line, the attendant rushes the hose into your tank and starts pumping before you can exit the car, of course conveniently forgetting to reset the pump from the last sale; once I had them "fill" my 45 liter auxiliary tank with over a 100 liters of gas.) Enough "almost-got-taken" stories.

The Friday before I left, I hired a driver and car, and with prearranged entrance permits visited the private forest reserves of San Isidro at about 6,000 feet and Guango at about 9,300 feet, both on the eastern slopes of the Andes. I only had a matter of about 3 ½ hours in each, but it permitted me to get a few new bird species; Interestingly, the Andes are so high they form a natural barrier for birds, and the eastern and western slopes, even at the same elevations, contain almost entirely different species. I was pleased to photograph 2 more species of antpittas, bringing my total for Ecuador to 6; these birds are ground dwellers in the deep dark forests, and so very rarely seen. However, starting with Angel Paz's Reserve (which I wrote of from Mindo), many private reserves now have learned to provide a daily meal of worms in tiny clearings off trails deep in the forest, and so accustom certain birds to show up for free food, thus providing more of a chance to see the reclusive birds. I also am rather pleased at finding I have now photographed my 40<sup>th</sup> species of hummingbird in Ecuador (there are a total of 133 different hummingbirds in Ecuador).

The flight back was the usual very very long haul, leaving at night, long layover in Atlanta, and arriving Tucson the next afternoon. Nice to be back in Tucson, although we had the coldest first week in December in 98 years. I have included a few of the last day's bird pictures, including several more hummingbirds. I am about ready to start thinking of the next trip. Later. Dave



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1 Inca Jay, San Isidro, Ecuador



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White-breasted Antpitta, San Isidro, Ecuador



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Long-tailed Sylph, San Isidro, Ecuador



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Sword-billed Hummingbird, Guango, Ecuador



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Collared Inca, Guango, Ecuador



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Tourmaline Sunangel, Guango, Ecuador





White-breasted Woodstar, Guango,

Ecuador