

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : ARRIVAL- QUITO

Our trip will start in **Quito**, the capital city, located on the flanks of the **Pichincha Volcano** (4701 m) and encircled by three mighty snow-capped volcanoes, the **Cotopaxi** (5896 m), the **Cayambe** (5796 m) and the **Antisana** (5704m). If your arrival time permits, we will make a short drive to the nearby **Chiche Canyon**, where the xerophytic vegetation of dense scrubs is punctuated with emerging *Agave* flowers and Cacti. We will have the chance of seeing a number of species relatively common in this type of habitat : *Sparkling Violetear*, *Black-tailed Trainbearer*, *Giant Conebill*, *Cinereous Conebill*, *Golden-rumped Euphonia*, *Blue-and-yellow Tanager*, *Southern Yellow Grosbeak*, *Hooded Siskin*...

Day 2 : QUITO - WILD SUMACO LODGE

We will start the precipitous descent to the luxuriant Amazonian basin. After a few stops along the road to investigate some secondary habitats in the Andean foothills, we will reach our base for the next two days: the magnificently located **Wild Sumaco lodge**.

Days 3 and 4: WILD SUMACO LODGE

The foothill forests of eastern **Andes** are among the richest ecosystems in the world. The **Wild Sumaco lodge** is nested deep within these forests and will give us the rare opportunity to get acquainted with this extreme biodiversity in the best of settings. Fast-flowing torrents run among a lush forest laden with mosses and epiphytes and rich in fruiting and flowering trees. Located on the lower slopes of the **Sumaco Volcano**, the lodge displays a maze of trails providing prime access to many particular habitats endangered by the rapid deforestation on the eastern slope of the **Andes** (patches of *Chusquea* bamboos, low foothills forest...). The mosaic of open habitat, pastures and primary and secondary forest host a bewildering array of bird species. A good number of restricted range species are

here: *Napo Sabrewing*, *Ecuadorian Piedtail*, *Rufous-vented Whitetip* (all regular attenders to the lodge feeders) or *Coppery-chested Jacamar*, *Olive-chested Flycatcher*, *Yellow-cheeked Becard*, *Blue-rumped Manakin* and *Olivaceous Greenlet*...

The hummingbird feeders set within the forest attract more than twenty species: *Black-throated Brilliant*, *Gray-chinned Hermit*, *Violet-headed Hummingbird*, *Wire-crested Thorntail*, *Gould's Jewel-front*, *White-tailed Hillstar*, *Fork-tailed Woodnymph*, *Golden-tailed Sapphire*, *Many-spotted Hummingbird*, *Violet-fronted Brilliant* and several others.

By exploring the fabulous foothill forest around the lodge and the small creeks we will have the opportunity of observing many species: *Fasciated Tiger-*



Heron, *Buckley's Forest Falcon*, *Foothill Screech-Owl*, *Band-bellied Owl*, *Coppery-chested Jacamar*, *Rufous-breasted* and *Lafresnaye's Piculets*, *Little Golden-olive*, *Smoky-brown* and *Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers*, *Ash-browed* and *Dusky Spinetails*, *Black-billed Treehunter*, *Olivaceous* and *Olive-backed Woodcreepers*, *Lined Antshrike*, *Black* and *Blackish Antbirds*, *Rufous-winged* and *Yellow-breasted Antwrens*, *White-backed Fire-eye*, *Golden-*



faceted and Ecuadorian Tyrannulets, Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrant, Buff-throated and Black-and-white Tody-Tyrants, Slaty-capped, Cliff, Short-crested, Piratic and Lemon-browed Flycatchers, Red-billed Tyrannulet, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Olive-faced Flatbill, Long-tailed Tyrant, White-winged Becard, Masked Tityra, Thrush-like, Coraya and Wing-banded Wrens, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Cerulean, Blackburnian and Canada Warblers, Silver-beaked, Magpie, Paradise, Orange-eared, Golden-eared, Spotted and Summer Tanagers, Golden-eyed Flowerpiercer, Grayish Saltator, Blue-black Grassquit, Chestnut-bellied Seed-Finch, Chestnut-bellied and Black-and-white Seedeaters, Russet-backed Oropendola, Olive Finch, Olivaceous Siskin...

As usual, a number of more elusive or rare species can be seen and we will stand good chances to see at least a couple of these as well, such as the *White-streaked Antvireo*, the *Chestnut-crowned Gnateater*, the devilishly shy *Plain-backed Antpitta*, or the recently described *Foothill Elaenia*, the unobtrusive *Yellow-throated Spadebill*, *Scarlet-breasted* and *Fiery-throated Fruiteaters*, the vocal *Gray-tailed Piha* or the poorly known *Blue-browed Tanager*.

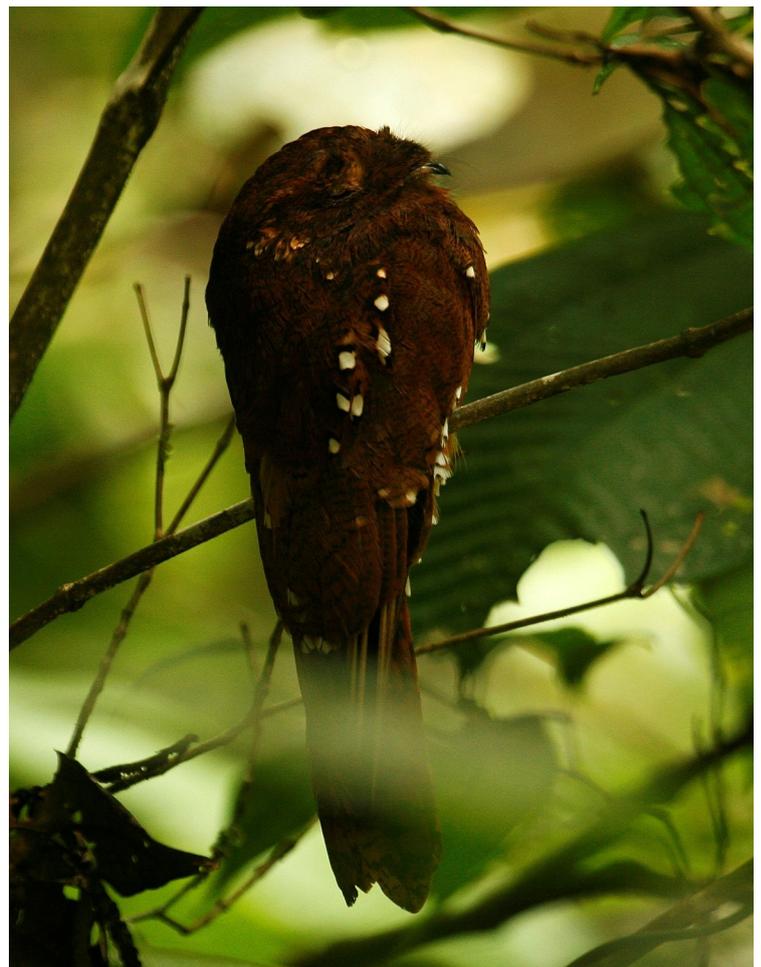
Days 5, 6 and 7 : GARENO LODGE

Before heading to our next destination, we will enjoy a few hours of morning birding around **Wild Sumaco**. We will then enter the immensity of the Amazonian plains for good and reach for the **Gareno lodge**.

The lodge itself is located at the border of the **Yasuni National Park**, the largest in **Ecuador**, on the territory of the **Huaorani** tribe. Most families in this

fiery and proud Amazonian tribe have forgone their traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle. They have until recently fiercely opposed the settling of farmers, logging and oil companies on their territory, sometimes even very violently. To this day, many local conflicts on how to protect their land surface now and again, and a tiny number of familial groups still cling to an almost purely traditional lifestyle. A number of ethnologists state that in the deeps of their territory a few familial groups never have been in contact with civilization. Our lodge, located in a clearing not far from a small river will provide access to a magnificent pristine forest environment.

Birdwatchers usually come here because the lodge is located in what is the most extensive and accessible surface of rolling **Terra Firme** in **Ecuador**. Two avian highlights are easier to find here than almost anywhere else in **Ecuador**: the fabulous *Fiery Topaz*, a rare and localized hummingbird that lingers along a small forest creek near the lodge and the mysterious and super-rare *Rufous Po-too*, regularly found on its day roosting site. Last and not least, the mighty *Harpy Eagle* has nested





near the lodge for several years and the area is definitely one of the best in Ecuador to look for this near-mythical bird of prey.

We will take advantage of our stay here to roam the forest trails and road sides to look for the many species that can be observed in the area: *White Hawk, Black Caracara, Red-throated Caracara, Chestnut-headed Crake, Cobalt-winged Parakeet, Black-headed Parrot, Mealy Amazon, Short-tailed Swift, White-bearded and Great-billed Hermits, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Grey-breasted Sabrewing, Black-tailed and Green-backed Trogons, White-eared, Yellow-billed and Brown Jacamars, White-fronted and Yellow-billed Nunbirds, Brown Nunlet, Gilded and Lemon-throated Barbets, Many-banded and Ivory-billed Aracaris, Channel-billed and White-throated Toucans, Chestnut and Red-stained Woodpeckers, Speckled Spinetail, Chestnut-winged Hookbill, Chestnut-winged Foliage-gleaner, Wedge-billed, Cinnamon-throated and Lineated Woodcreepers, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, Cinereous Antshrike, Plain-winged and Dusky-throated Antshrikes, Dugand's, Rufous-tailed, White-flanked, Gray, Pygmy and Moustached Antwrens, Gray, Yellow-browed, White-shouldered, Sooty, Whi-*

te-plumed and White-cheeked Antbird, Reddish-winged Bare-eye, Black-faced Antthrush, White-lored Tyrannulet, Zimmer's Flatbill, Double-banded Pygmy-Tyrant, White-eyed Tody-Tyrant, Spangled, Plum-throated and Purple-throated Cotingas, Pink-throated Becard, Wing-barred Piprites, Dusky-capped and Lemon-chested Greenlets, Blue-crowned and Blue-backed Manakins, Yellow-backed, Masked, Opal-rumped, Opal-crowned, Masked Crimson, Flame-crested and Fulvous-crested Tanagers, Purple and Green Honeycreepers, Black-faced and Yellow-bellied Dacnises, Rufous-bellied and White-lored Euphonias...

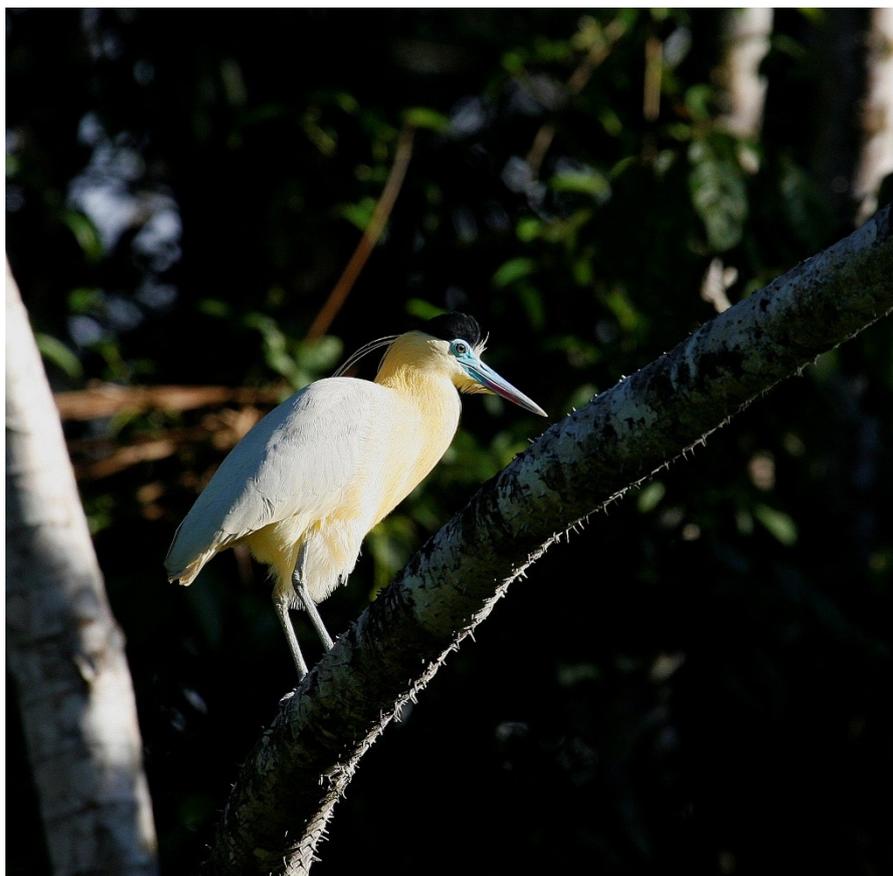
During the last day of this stay, we will take the road again. After a few more stops on the road to explore the Amazonian secondary areas we will cross, we will arrive at the end of the day in the small Amazonian town of **Coca**, starting point of **Francisco de Orellana** when he discovered the *Great River of Amazons warriors* more commonly called the **Amazon**.

Days 8 to 11 : SANI LODGE

From the docks along the river, we will start our



journey on the **Rio Napo**, one of the main tributaries of the mighty **Amazon** river to the sandy banks



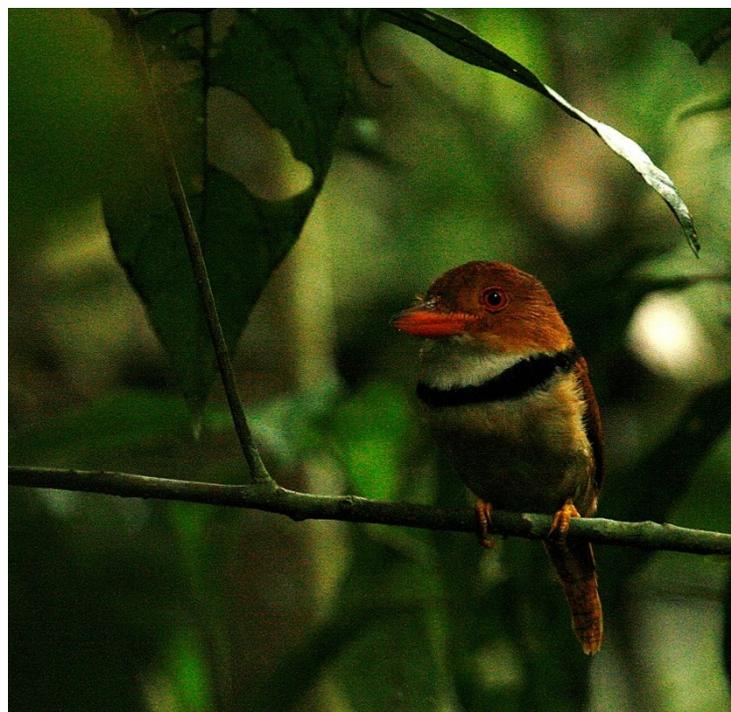
marking the territory of the **Sani Isla** community. Despite the speed of our pirogue we will have the opportunity to see a few species closely tied with riverine or water habitats and the adjacent forests: *Cocoi Heron*, *Great et Snowy Egrets*, *Greater Yellow-headed Vulture*, *Yellow-headed Caracara*, *Pied et Collared Plovers*, *Large-billed* and *Yellow-billed Terns*, *Sand-colored Nighthawk*, *Swallow-wing*, *Chestnut-eared Aracari*, *Drab Water-Tyrant*, *Bare-necked Fruitcrow* or *Gray-breasted Martin* to name a few. We will also pass by the numerous vegetated sandy islets, some of them dominated by *Cecropia* trees, the favorite habitat of the mythical *Amazonian Umbrellabird*.

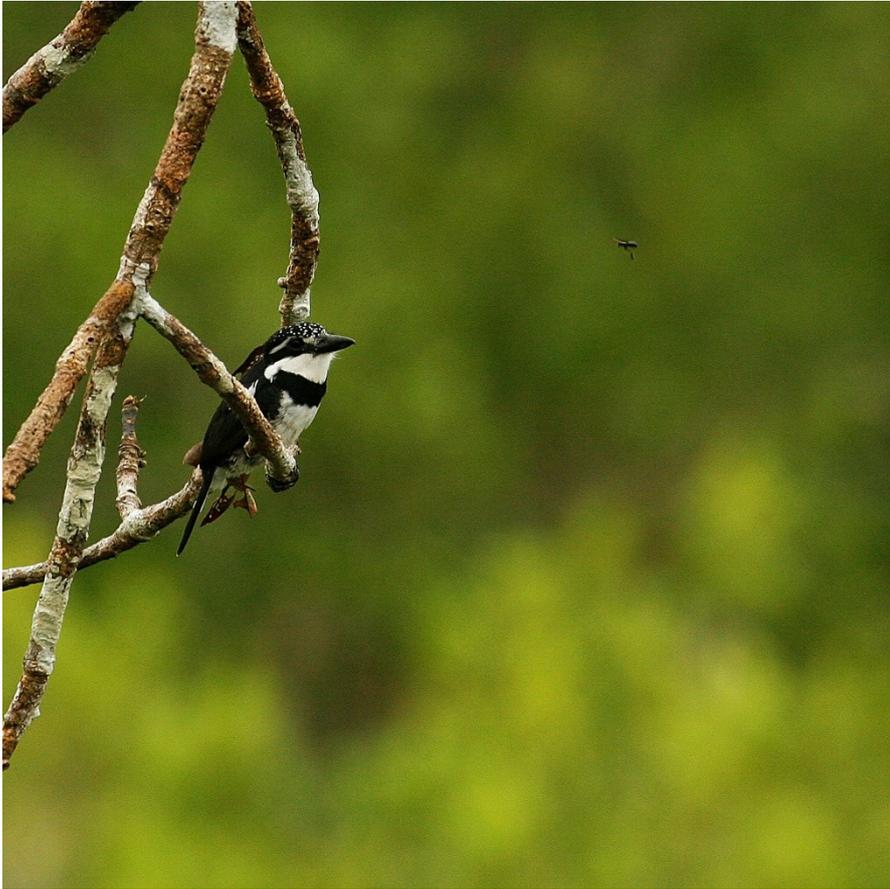
After a short walk along a wooden walkway in a beautiful partially inundated forest (so-called **Varzea** forest), we will use small non-motorized canoes (our daily transport from now on) and paddle our way through the narrow channel leading to the laguna at the edge of which the lodge has been built. The water in the laguna and adjacent channels displays a strikingly dark color which has given it its name of "black waters". This is due to the leaching of large amount of tannins from decaying leaves carried by the abundant Amazonian rains on the forest floor. We will soon see the most com-

mon species, those who will accompany us for the remaining of our stay here: *Yellow-rumped Caciques* and *Russet-backed Oropendolas* around the tall trees hosting their peculiarly burse-shaped nests or small companies of *Chestnut-fronted* or *Red-bellied Macaws* which regularly fly over the laguna. After sunset, amphibians start their nightly chorus, only sometimes interrupted by the relentless call of a *Pauraque* or the melancholic song of a *Common Potoo*. Both *Tawny-bellied* and *Tropical Screech-Owls* can be heard singing next to the restaurant and the soft trill of the *Feruginous Pygmy-Owl* will accompany us through the night.

Sani lodge is undisputably one of the top Amazonian lodges. The absolute quietness of the place is startling as the sun rises over the laguna disrupted only by the echoing songs of *Cinereous*, *Undulated* and *Great Tinamous*. But soon groups of *Orange-winged*, *Yellow-crowned* and *Mealy Amazons* leave their night roosting sites and

loudly fly over the still water. The loud trill of a *Straight-billed Woodcreeper* resonate from deep within the submerged forest as the strange *Hoatzin* starts his day by stretching its wide wings. The immediate surroundings of the lodge, the laguna and the forest clearing where the cabins have been built will already allow us to observe many com-





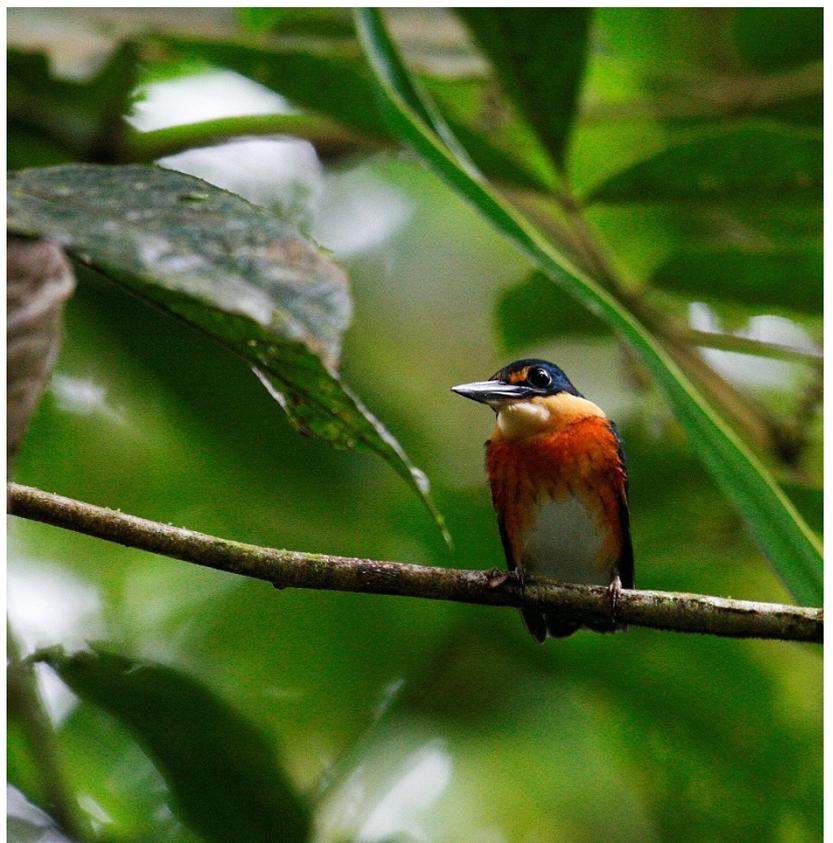
Sooty Antbird, Yellow-crowned Elaenia, Grey-capped Flycatcher, Great and Lesser Kiskadee, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Orange-crested Manakin, Violaceous Jay, White-winged and White-banded Swallow, Black-capped Donacobius, Grey-headed, Masked-crimson and Silver-beaked Tanager, Red-capped Cardinal...

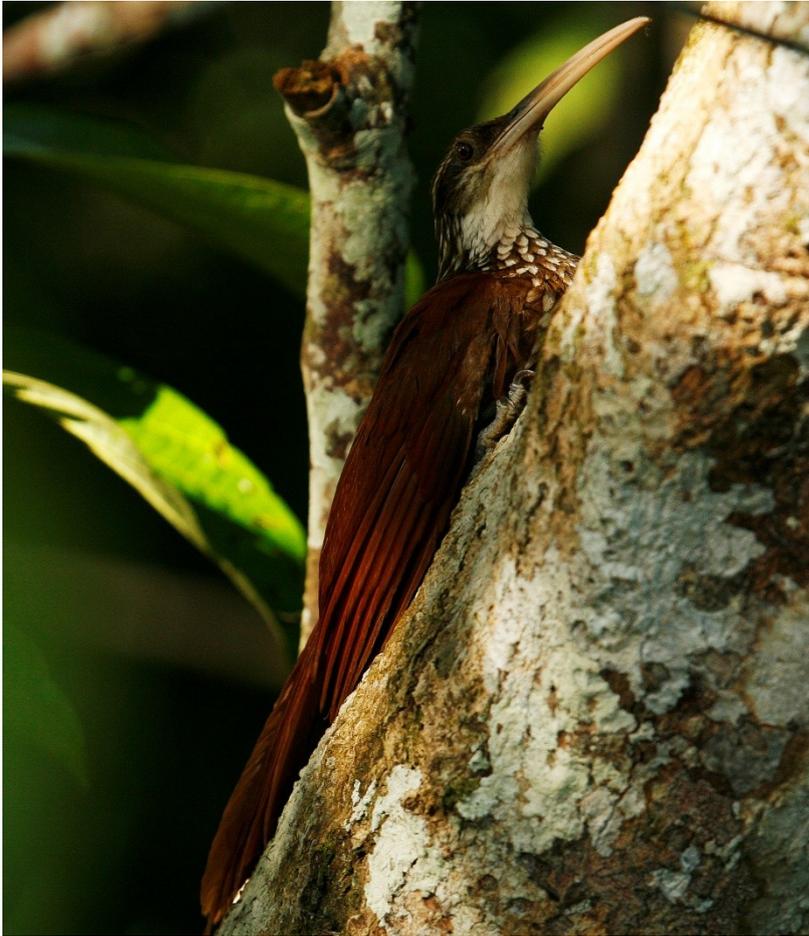
A few moriche palm patches host species such as Blue-throated Piping Guan, Sulphury Flycatcher or the incredible Point-tailed Palmcreeper.

The forest system immediately adjacent to the lodge is mainly made of **Varzea**, these seasonally inundated forests, and host many nice species: Black-throated Trogon, Collared Puffbird, Brown Nunlet, Rufous-breasted Piculet, Chestnut and Cream-colored Woodpecker, Plain-winged and Dusky-throated Antshrike, Long-winged and Grey Antwren, Peruvian Warbling Antbird, Black-spotted Bare-eye, Black-

mon species. Rufous-breasted Hermits and Black-throated Mangos often hover around the flowers of *Heliconia* close to the water. Black-fronted Nunbirds can be seen easily perching around the lodge, whereas their more forest cousins, White-fronted Nunbirds can also be heard. Ringed, Green and Amazon Kingfisher are often seen dashing across the laguna. The bushy laguna banks and tangles are home to the wonderful White-chinned Jacamar, Silvered, Plumbeous and Dot-backed Antbirds, while the throbbing song of the Cinnamon Attila is constantly heard. The beautiful and discreet Green-and-rufous Kingfisher and its minute cousin, the American Pygmy Kingfisher can be found along the narrow blackwater channels, where at night one can sometimes also find the secretive and mythical Zigzag Heron. The laguna and the surrounding riverine vegetation provide prime observation conditions and many many species will allow us to study and admire them: Speckled Chachalaca, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Boat-billed and Agami Heron, Slender-billed Kite, Sunbittern, Sungrebe, Azure Gallinule, Pale-vented Pigeon, Greater Ani, Chestnut-crowned Foliage Gleaner, Striped Woodcreeper, Amazonian streaked Antwren, White-shouldered and

faced Antthrush, Orange-eyed Flatbill, Greyish Mourner, Screaming Piha... Sani is undoubtedly the best place in the world to see the near-endemic and ultra-rare Cocha Antshrike. Several nearby territories of *Varzea Schiffornis* and White-lored Ant-





Double-banded Pygmy-Tyrant, Orange-backed Troupial... We will then dive deeper into one of the most exciting ecosystems on earth, the **Terra Firme**. Along the narrow muddy trail weaving through a beautiful luxuriant forest, we will observe typical species: *Spix's Guan, Lined and Slaty-backed Forest Falcon, Grey-winged Trumpeter, Black-tailed Trogon, Purplish Jacamar, White-chested Puffbird, Scale-breasted Woodpecker, Black-tailed and Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, Ruddy Spinetail, Chestnut-winged Hookbill, Rufous-rumped, Rufous tailed and Chestnut-winged Foliage Gleaner, Mouse-colored and Cinereous Antshrike, Dugand's Antwren, Yellow-browed, Black-faced and Scale-backed Antbird, Striated Antthrush, Rusty-belted Tapaculo, Ringed Antpitpit, Blue-backed and Wire-tailed Manakin, Pink-throated Becard, Wing-barred Piprites...* We will also look for army ant swarms, which are generally followed by a guild of specialized species: *White-plumed, Lunulated and Bicoloured Antbirds, Reddish-winged Bare-eye, White-chinned, Amazonian Barred and Plain-*

pitta are also found and might provide us with some much-wanted observations.

In order to the other main forest habitat in the **Amazon**, the never inundated so-called **Terra Fir-**

me, we will have to cross the **Napo** river and land on the clearings and secondarised habitats administered by the **Sani Isla** community. As a rule, most indian communities live along a narrow strip of land along the large rivers where fertile silts are deposited by floods. We will explore these secondary habitats, a mosaic of forests, cassava, banana and cocoa plantations which harbor a diverse avifauna: *Rufous-headed Woodpecker, Chestnut-capped Puffbird, Gilded Barbet, Yellow-billed Nunbird, Chestnut-eared Araçari, Yellow-tufted and Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Speckled Spinetail, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, Great Antshrike, Pygmy Antwren, Black Antbird, Yellow-crowned tyrannulet,*

Understory flocks can also be very interesting with species such as Fasciated and Undulated Antshrike, Ocellated Woodcreeper, Olive-backed and Cinnamon-rumped Foliage-gleaner,





Plain-throated, Yasuni, Rufous-tailed and Ornate Antwrens... We should also be on the look for the possible appearance of one of the rarer species present in the area: *White-throated Tinamou, Salvin's Curassow, Sapphire Quail Dove, Crested Owl, Long-tailed Potoo, Pavonine Quetzal, Great Jacamar, Black Bushbird, Rio Suno Antwren, Banded and Wing-banded Antbird, Ochre-striped Antpitta, Brownish Twistwing, Black-necked Red-Cotinga...*

The morning visit of the canopy tower should undoubtedly be one of the highlights of the whole trip. Built on a giant *Ceibo* tree, more than 35 m from the ground, a large platform allows one to observe the passing canopy flocks. Soothed by the intricate song of the *Lawrence's Thrush* and the plaintive calls of the *Citron-bellied Attila*, we will

enjoy the panoramic view encompassing the vastness of the Amazonian wilderness. The frustrating canopy flocks that are so difficult to see from the ground will finally surrender to us: *Double-toothed Kite, Crane and Slate-colored Hawk, Ornate and Black hawk Eagle, Blue-and-yellow and Scarlet Macaw, Black-headed and*

Orange-winged Parrot, Green-backed and Violaceous Trogons, White-necked and Pied Puffbird, Lemon-throated Barbet, Lettered and Ivory-billed Aracari, White-throated and Channel-billed Toucan, Long-billed and Cinnamon-throated Woodcreeper, Slender-footed and White-lored Tyrannulet, Yellow-browed Tody-Flycatcher, Crowned Slaty Flycatcher, Eastern Sirystes, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Black-capped Becard, Black-tailed Tityra, White-browed Purpletuft, Plum-throated and Spangled Cotinga, Thick-billed, Golden-bellied, Rufous-bellied and Orange-bellied Euphonias, Yellow-bellied, Turquoise, Masked, Paradise and Green-and-gold Tanagers, Fulvous Shrike-Tanager, Blue Dacnis, Crested, Green and Olive Oropendola.

With a little luck we might even see one of the very elusive winged giant of the Amazonian rainforest: a *Harpy* or a *Crested Eagle*.

We will have the opportunity to visit one of the most specialized ecosystems on earth, created by the vagaries and movements of the large Amazonian rivers. The constant change in water level and bed course create temporary islands of varying sizes. If the islands remain emerged long enough, vegetation starts to colonize it and a very specialized fauna and flora builds up. What is more, depending on the age of the island, the vegetal cover is more or less developed which in turn lead to different bird species. To maximize the number of specialized species, we will then visit several islands of different ages. Species we will intently



search for comprise *Olive-spotted Hummingbird*, *Lesser Hornero*, *Plain-crowned* et *White-bellied Spinetail*, *Parker's Spinetail*, *Castelnau's Antshrike*, *Black-and-white Antbird*, *Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant*, *River Tyrannulet*, *Fuscous Flycatcher*, *Riverside Tyrant*. Some species which can be more ubiquitous elsewhere are found mostly on river islands in **Amazonia**: *Gray-breasted Crake*, *White-tipped Dove*, *Striped Owl*, *Scarlet-crowned Barbet*, *Barred Antshrike*, *Spotted Tody-Flycatcher*, *Mottle-backed Elaenia*, *Little Ground-Tyrant* (very rare in **Ecuador**), *Orange-headed Tanager*, *Orange-fronted Plush-crown*, *Greyish Saltator*, *Oriole Blackbird*...

As the day progresses, the heat will become more stifling and we will depart and examine the banks of the **Napo** river to spot a cryptic *Ladder-tailed Nightjar* roosting on an emerging stump, or visit known sites for both *Brown* and *White-eared Jacamar*. We might even find a motionless and cryptic *Great Potoo* roosting on a broken *Cecropia*, but the true objective of our canoe ride will be to enjoy one of the great wonders of the ornithological world. Owing to the large number of fruits and edible leaves available in this season, large flocks of parrots need to ingest clay and minerals to ease their digestion. Two fantastic clay-licks are located in the immediate vicinity of the lodge. Noisy groups of *Mealy*, *Yellow-crowned Amazons*, *Dusky-headed Parakeets* and *Blue-headed Parrots* daily invade a

clay cliff on the river bank, whereas the second clay-lick is located deeper into the forest and is assailed by myriads of small *Cobalt-winged Parakeets*, while every once and then the scarcer *Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet* or the *Orange-cheeked Parrot* put in a remarked appearance.

Days 12 and 13 : SANI LODGE - COCA - QUITO - INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURE

After a few hours of birding around the lodge clearing, we will leave to **Coca** and take a plane to **Quito**. We will leave the vast Amazonian plains behind us, fly over the mighty **Andes** and land in **Quito** where we will spend the night, before taking our international flight the next day.

