

# Birds in Ecuador: A Photographic Journey

by Glenn Bartley

Because I am a nature lover and conservationist, I am deeply concerned about the future of the world's birds. When I returned from my trip to Ecuador (see main article, May 2010 *Birding*, pp. 54–57), I wanted to find a way to help protect the birds of Ecuador. I decided to team up with the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation (MCF), an Ecuadorian nonprofit conservation group that specializes in linking birding tourism to habitat conservation. Our plan was to publish my book, *Birds in Ecuador: A Photographic Journey*, in an effort to raise money for bird and habitat conservation.

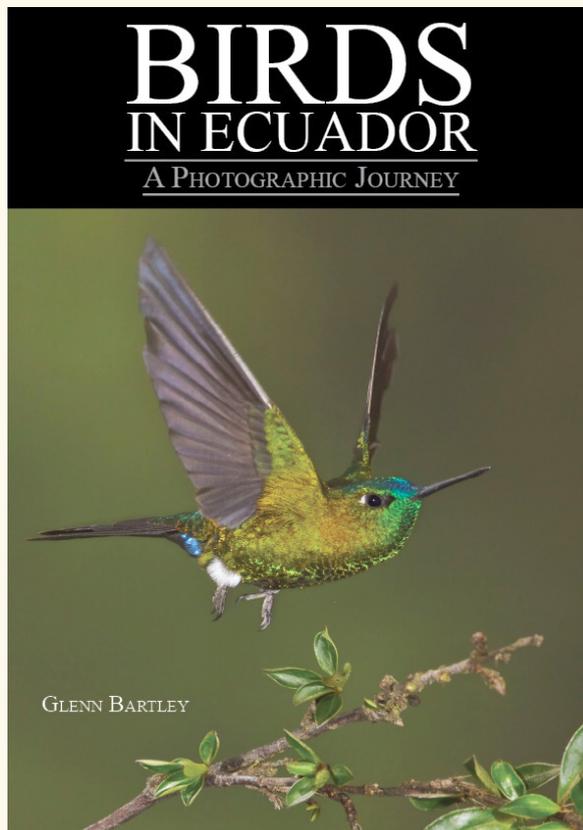
MCF is a fantastic organization that is making tremendous strides toward conservation in Ecuador. Along with its various community-based conservation initiatives, MCF owns and operates two popular bird sanctuaries in the Andean foothills and tropical lowlands—the Milpe and Río Silanche preserves, respectively. MCF was also instrumental in the creation of the Paseo del Quinde—South America's first eco-scenic route—birders' trail. MCF's bird sanctuaries are part of an altitudinal transect linking the tropical Andes and Tumbes-Chocó-Magdalena biodiversity hotspots as characterized by Conservation International; also, they are in or near three places designated by Birdlife International as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in northwestern Ecuador. Mindo's lands and activities help protect an important suite of avian species—including 70 regional endemic, 11 vulnerable, and two endangered species—along with many boreal migrants and species categorized as “near threatened.”

The book *Birds in Ecuador: A Photographic Journey* is a joint effort—involving the author (me) and the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation—to raise money for habitat conservation in Ecuador. Half of all proceeds from this book go directly to the foundation to aid in their fantastic work toward protecting habitat in Ecuador.

*Birds in Ecuador* is yours for \$29.95 (plus \$5 for shipping). Order your copy of *Birds in Ecuador* online <glennbartley.com> and help support habitat conservation.

“There are a lot of bird photographers these days. But rarely have I seen such exquisite bird images as these taken by Glenn Bartley during his time in Ecuador. How Bartley managed to get so much, often of species scarce and sometimes even difficult to see—much less photograph—is a mystery. But we're all the richer for it. Enjoy this sampling of Ecuador's avian riches, and never forget that many are rare and even endangered.”

—Dr. Robert S. Ridgely,  
World Land Trust



“Having birded in Ecuador for more than 15 years, I know how difficult it can be to glimpse some of these birds. What Glenn Bartley has done here is beyond belief—capturing the beauty and still retaining the naturalness of some of Ecuador's most amazing birds. This is as good as it gets! I hope this book inspires everyone who reads it to visit Ecuador and South America and to help us protect the birds' many threatened habitats.”

—Jonas Nilsson,  
Rio Pucuno Foundation

“Glenn Bartley takes us on a visual journey through this bird-rich paradise as active participants in his exciting quest and presents an impressive selection of both widespread and incredibly

scarce species. We are fortunate to partner with Glenn in sharing his work for our collective enjoyment and to give something back to the birds.”

—Paul Greenfield,  
Mindo Cloudforest Foundation

Here is an interesting commentary from Mercedes Rivadeneira, a co-owner of the Ecuador-based bird tour company Neblina Forest. In this commentary, Rivadeneira gives her perspective on how birding tourism has played a major role in propelling land protection in Ecuador. —Editor

Back in 1990, when I first birded Mindo, my colleagues and I chose the Lasso Family farm—today known as Sacha Tamia lodge—to overnight. Trucks passed by so loudly that sleeping was very difficult. These trucks carried timber cut from the area and being hauled from Mindo north to Pedro Vicente Maldonado. By 1991, I had set up a lodge at this farm and soon, large companies like VENT, WINGS, and Field Guides were finding it easier to bird with a place to overnight comfortably.

The Mindo community found it interesting to see these groups of funny-looking older gringos with equipment they did not understand walk the cobble stone road and ask about Andean Cock-of-the-rock “leks.”

Five years later you could walk the same roads and find cafes, lodges, and directions to a nearby lek. You could find a local guide easily, and you could find directions on town street

signs to the best trails.

"Birding and birders changed the way the population of Mindo saw the possibility of making ends meet. Back in 1991, if you asked a local Quiteño where Mindo was, nobody knew. Today, Mindo is a popular weekend destination. The conservation of this place started when birding and birders began to support the community. Birders put Mindo on the map and made it a destination. This has been profitable for the community, *and not one penny was donated.*

This successful experience needs to be replicated in Mashpi. The lands surrounding this town have the last remnants of true cloudforest in the local area. Unfortunately, lumber companies are already present in Mashpi and have begun to cut commercially. The community must learn to see ecotourism, birding, lodging, and conservation as the optimal source of income in order to support these forest homes for some specialized

birds—Toucan Barbet, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Club-Winged Manakin, Choco Warbler, Glistening-green Tanager, and many others.

We at Neblina Forest are promoting Mashpi as a destination on every one of our trips that head out to the Ecuadorean northwest. Additionally, the Neblina forest staff and guides are visiting the owners of properties that we use as birding spots to promote local understanding of birding and what area residents could do to attract more visitors. The locals are accepting the initiative quite well, and it is our hope that the lumber companies will have to turn around and leave. The birds and the people of this small town deserve the benefits and financial opportunity that were found in Mindo. Mashpi, with its phenomenal and pristine cloudforests, needs our support. Neblina Forest is not asking for money or donations. We simply need visiting clients to justify the change and growth in local income for Mashpi.

—Mercedes Rivadeneira



Plate-billed Mountain Toucan. © Paul J. Greenfield.