



BIRD ALLIANCE BULLETIN

May/June 2025

BIRD ALLIANCE OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

BIRDATHON 2025

May 1-20



The Alliance's primary fundraiser is here! Individuals and teams of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to get out in nature and count birds around New Mexico. Doing so will help our chapter's continuing efforts to protect birds and their habitats.

Here's how you can participate:

- Plan how you want to enter; as an individual or team (2 or more)
- Sign up by sending your name/team name to our Birdathon Coordinator at leehopwood@bacnm.org. The deadline to enter is May 20.
- Choose one 24-hour period between May 1 and May 20 to get out and bird anywhere in New Mexico; yard birding is encouraged!
- Collect pledge promises from friends, neighbors, or organizations, or pledge a fixed amount for yourself. You can ask for pledges based on the number of birds, number of species, amount of time spent birding, or a fixed amount for your efforts.
- Report your results by sharing your checklists on eBird with **BirdallianceCNM** or submit a list to Lee Hopwood by email or mail.
- Collect your pledges and then submit the total amount raised by using the **Donate** button on our website (BACNM.org—check the box in the form to provide a comment to confirm your Birdathon participation). Or you may send a check.



*Blue Grosbeak female,
photo by Lefty Arnold.*

Help us reach our goal to raise \$3,000!

We will announce the winners on our website and newsletter, including the most birds counted, the most species counted, and the greatest amount raised.

Submit results and pledges by mail/email to:

leehopwood@bacnm.org

Bird Alliance of CNM

PO BOX 30002, Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002

Woodpeckers of the Black Oak Savannah, April 10, 2025

by Bob Wilcox

I found myself embedded in northwest Indiana last week and it's a strange transmogrification. I'm watching over my mom's health needs while my sister and her husband are away. Bless them for doing that task most of the time. But it leaves a lot of free hours during the day. I've struggled to find comfortable birding areas around here, but this time I decided to explore the Indiana Dunes area.

Fellow birders Zvi and Judy live only 90 minutes away and arranged to meet me there. It was good to see them both, but apparently Judy has a problem.



Though she lives smack dab in the middle of Pileated Woodpecker range, she has never seen one and calls the innocent creature a nemesis. We drove from Chesterton up the highway a few miles to Cowles Bog Trail. This is a wonderful combination of wetland, sand dune, and black oak forest that reaches to the south shore of Lake Michigan two kilometers away.

Of course, the weather is a bit harsh today and I'm wondering how to juggle binoculars and eBird while wearing my bulky gloves. Getting out of the car, we immediately hear a familiar voice: Sandhill Cranes are scattered about. I saw 40 or more striding about the banks of a grassy creek, and there were lots of mallards and dozens of Blue-winged Teal in several wetland ponds. In one plowed field, I will see 31 snipes together feeding, but that will be tomorrow. Today we start walking and hear Red-winged Blackbirds, Bluejays, Song Sparrows, and Swamp Sparrows ticking. Dozens of American Robins abound.

The skeletal shapes of the leafless black oaks surround us and do indeed make us think of woodpeckers. A few minutes later, we've found flickers, Downy Woodpecker, and Red-bellied Woodpecker. Their calls are clear and penetrating in the morning cold. Suddenly, I see a flash of black, white, and red. It is my all-time lucky bird. I love seeing Red-headed Woodpeckers (RHWO) and find them somehow unreal in their perfection even among the other spectacular birds. I remember right now that I painted a plastic model of a RHWO as a kid. Maybe I was pushed toward birding as a child and have forgotten that.

Zvi says that Merlin has heard a Pileated. I never heard it, but then I don't know that bird too well, do I? Ahead, a large shape is flying silently through the branches to a perch about 50 meters away. Walking forward, we are able to spot the bird. Judy gets a lock on it and it is a Pileated Woodpecker for sure. She's got her lifer. A while later on the way back, we see the bird flying again. We see the flashing white spots on broad wings and we're all three pleased with this huge bird.

We are on a path that has a long boardwalk over boggy wetland, which should be good for rails, bitterns, and soras, but we don't see any. We do get a meager look at Swamp Sparrow and Hermit Thrush.

For your information, I believe that this place (Cowle's Bog Trail) is an excellent spring and summer birding spot. I returned the next day and found Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-breasted Merganser, Sora, and, oh yes, the bird we didn't see but did hear: Wild Turkey. I made it to the beach after walking over several huge, long dune hills. I saw three men dressed in waders slogging about in the marsh who said they were cutting off cattail seedheads. I forgot to ask them why. Does anyone know?

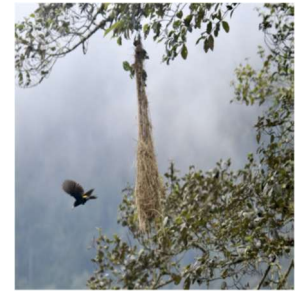
Trip Report: Cloud Forests of Northern Ecuador

By Lee Hopwood

I recently returned from a trip to Ecuador, Northern Cloud Forest, in March, with the Birding-by-Bus tour company. Having been to a number of places in Central America during the last 15 years, it was my first venture to South America and it was fantastic!

I arrived in Quito, Ecuador late at night on March 18 where I was met by Elaina Ardila Kramer, owner and guide for the company. The tour officially started at 5 p.m. on March 19. I arrived a day early to avoid missing the start of the tour and the welcoming dinner on the 19. It seems all flights into Ecuador arrive late at night, and depart late at night. So, the extra day allowed me to be on time and take a moment to acclimate before getting started. Additionally, we had a local guide, Andrea and our driver, Edgar, who were both amazing birders and took very good care of us the entire trip.

The first two nights were at the San Jose Puenbo Hotel in Quito. The grounds of the hotel were very birdy! I met my first team mate, Shawn, on the grounds of the hotel while birding that morning. We hit it off immediately and spent a few hours birding. The weather was great, sunny, but not too hot, and dry. Otherwise, it rained most days while in Ecuador, usually late afternoon or evening. That said, we did have day-time rains that were tolerable for birding.



The tour spent time in elevations ranging between 4,000 to 14,000 feet. We stayed in four different lodges/hotels, (San Jose Puenbo Hotel in Quito, Sachatamis Lodge in Mindo, Cabanas del Lodge in Otavalo, and Cabanas San Isidro in Napo) all of which were quite nice. The food was excellent and everyone's special diets (vegan and vegetarian, or hold the cilantro) were available and delicious.

We visited several Reserves during the trip: Artisan Reserve; Yanacocha Reserve; Mashpi Reserve; Paz de la Aves; San Isidro Reserve and Guacamayos Ridge, and Papallacta Antennas. We also visited the famous open-air market in Otavalo.

During the tour, which was decidedly for birding, we also took time to take in and participate in several cultural activities. We visited a chocolate-making farm and business—we made chocolate from the coca pods—visited a family business of flute makers and musicians—we played music together—and enjoyed a family bakery (*Bizcochos en Horno a Lena*) that made only one product- bizcochos—a biscuit similar to biscochitos in New Mexico. We also had a contest making those delicious flakey and buttery snacks—a bag containing eight were \$1, then we visited a textile family of weavers where we learned how they made the dyes used in their work, and a woman-owned business (*Totora Wasi*) of weavers where we made toy llamas from stalks they provided.



We also toured the older section of Hysteria Hacienda Pinsaqui where we lunched and discovered it was "adobe," similar to many houses in New Mexico. Lastly, we toured a historical and humorous tour of the Equator at longitude OCC. De Greenwich 78°27'8" and Latitude 0°0'0".

I really enjoyed the cultural activities much more than I thought I would. It was wonderful to sit with, talk with, and listen to the stories of these artisans who shared with us their history and their arts.

Trip Report: Cloud Forests of Northern Ecuador – Continued

The entire tour netted 305 species of birds, of which I personally saw 294, including 210 lifers. I was not disappointed. We also saw several mammals and critters (White-tailed deer, Culpeo Fox, Western Red-tailed squirrel, Spectacled Bear (yep, in the wild), and Mountain Tapir).

But back to the birds—it is difficult to pick out favorites from a trip that yielded so many new species, but I did feel a certain connection to the Torrent Duck when she jumped in a raging river on a rainy day and popped back up to jump in again. Amazing! Unfortunately, it was raining fairly hard, so I didn't have my camera out, so I only captured a poor phone photo for this species.

Our final day in Ecuador was spent at 14,000 feet where we were treated to the amazing sight of the Rufous-bellied SeedSnipe. This spectacular bird was prancing around at 14,000 feet completely ignoring us. Awesome!

Again, it is difficult to pick a favorite bird out of so many. That said, I am partial to tanagers, and we saw many of them: White-capped Tanager; Green-grass tanager; Saffron-crowned Tanager; Hooded Mountain Tanager; Beryl-spangled Tanager; Dusky-faced Tanager; Blue-winged Tanager; Moss-backed Tanager;



Rufous-throated Tanager; Green-naped Tanager; Glistening-green Tanager; Swallow Tanager; Blue-necked Tanager; Black-cheeked Mountain Tanager; Blue-black Tanager; Blue-and-yellow Tanager; and Scarlet-bellied Tanager.



I also had to incorporate a few new words into my vocabulary: *concludes*, *canastero*, *hemispingus*, *chlorospingus*, *coronet*, *doradito*, flowerpiercer and racket-tails and metaltails.

And, yes, I saw the Andean Condor, the Cock-of-the-rock, the Andean Ibis, Carunculated Caracara, Choco Toucan, Golden-headed Quetzal, Cloud-forest Pygmy-owl and the Black-banded Owl. And, of course, no trip would be complete without the local everyday sparrow: Rufous-collared Sparrow. So many beautiful birds! Honestly, I can't wait until my next trip with Birding by Bus!



All photos by Lee Hopwood. In order of their appearance: Mountain Cacique at nest, Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Golden Tanager, Flame-faced Tanager, Red-headed Barbet and Andean Cock-of-the-rock.

MEMBERS' PHOTO GALLERY



Cooper's Hawk by Lawrence Rudd



Summer Tanager male, Portal, Arizona, by Lee Hopwood



Elegant Trogon male, Portal, Arizona, by Lee Hopwood

We would love to showcase your photos!

Email your photos to Lee Hopwood at
leehopwood@bacnm.org

Please include your name, location of the photo
and the name of the bird.

Early Birds by Jason Kitting

Spring definitely is in the air! The Lucy's Warbler (*Leiothlypis luciae*) is one of the earliest Spring migration arrivals to central New Mexico and the pictured male was caught in late-March 2022 at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park.



Besides the year-round Yellow-rumped Warblers, Lucy's Warblers are the first warbler species to arrive each spring. The adult males usually start arriving during the last week of March, while the females tend to arrive a week or two later in early April. Most other warbler species don't arrive until May.

Lucy's Warblers (LUWAs for short) are a southwestern specialty that breed along river courses with mesquite and/or cottonwoods in California, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. In recent years they also have been expanding north into parts of Colorado. This northward expansion also is true within the state of New Mexico.

Around 10 years ago, the furthest north they got in New Mexico was around Socorro. About 2012, the first pair of LUWAs were found breeding near the Rio Grande by Valle de Oro NWR. Today these birds are one of the most common breeding bird species in the Bosque all the way up to Santa Fe. This is likely thanks to warmer and easier winters that are allowing these early migrants to expand northward.

Another interesting fact about LUWAs is that they are one of only two cavity-nesting warbler species. The other species is the Prothonotary Warbler of the eastern U.S. LUWA's favorite nest site are abandoned woodpecker holes, but they also will use cavities formed by broken branches and occasionally nestboxes.

Here's a look at another early spring migrant and one of the most common breeding hummingbird species! The Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*) is one of the most widespread of the western hummingbirds. The birds pictured here (male, top; female, bottom) were encountered in the Spring of 2023 at Sevilleta NWR. These birds breed from central Texas, north along the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and into southern British Columbia. They also can be found breeding in the central valley of Calinto, Baja California.



Black-chinned Hummingbirds (BCHUs for short) are a highly adaptable species and can be found in a large variety of "low elevation" habitats. The pictured birds were encountered in mesquite scrub but they also are commonly found in riparian habitats, other desert scrub types (not just mesquite), pinyon/juniper woodland, and are common in most urban landscapes.

The eastern Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) is the closest relative to BCHUs, and together these two species are the only members of the *Archilochus* genus.

Belen Marsh Cleanup By Eileen Beaulieu

The Belen Marsh Committee sponsored its annual Spring cleanup of the Belen Marsh on Saturday, April 26. We had six energetic volunteers gathering the trash.

Unfortunately, there continues to be regular dumping at the marsh resulting in an increase in the amount of trash collected. We discovered that there seems to be an increase in what would be called “household trash” —just your everyday trash that would be picked up in the bins from waste management, but is showing up at the marsh instead.

We hope through the efforts of the Bird Alliance, the Isleta Reach Stewardship Association and the

Valencia Fair Board, funding can be found to begin to implement some fencing and signage to discourage this behavior.

During the cleanup we saw these birds: Mourning Dove; Black-necked Stilt; Killdeer; Wilson’s Phalarope; Snowy Egret; Western Cattle-egret; Common Raven; Northern Rough-winged Swallow; White-crowned Sparrow; Western Meadowlark; Red-winged Blackbird; and Great-tailed Grackle.



The Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico is a not-for-profit chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our mission is to protect and conserve birds and wildlife habitats in our region, support responsible stewardship of land, promote environmental education, and welcome all communities to join us in the love and appreciation of birds.

Please visit our website at www.bacnm.org.