



Wildlife of the World Newsletter

August 2025



Spectacled Bear (Tremarctos ornatus) in the Andes, Ecuador

Hi ,

Welcome to the latest newsletter as a rather pleasant, warm summer starts to draw to a close here in Wales.

This month I've decided to focus on the beautiful, tropical country of Ecuador. With habitats that range from the unique Galapagos Islands to amazing cloud forest, and bleak high Andes to lush Amazon rainforest... it's one of the most biodiverse countries in the world. It also happens to include both my least favourite place for wildlife photography and one of my favourites!

The spectacled bear above is actually the original Paddington Bear, the only bear native to Peru, though this one was photographed in Cayambe Coca National Park in the high Andes of Ecuador. At an

altitude of well over 5000 meters (more than five Snowdons on top of each other!) the park is covered in 'paramo' grassland, which is coarse, boggy and almost permanently shrouded in dense cloud. Put that together with the very real danger of altitude sickness and you can see why, despite the very cool 'Paddington' bears, it's my least favourite place in the world to try and photograph wildlife!

Thankfully, just a couple of hours drive down either slope of the Andes takes you into Ecuador's incredible cloud forest... which leads me to one of my very favourite places and this month's featured site:

Wildlife-watching Sites

Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve, Ecuador



Masked Flowerpiercer (Diglossa cyanea)

Bellavista was established over 30 years ago by Richard and Gloria Parsons to protect the local cloud forest. Today at over 2000 acres, it's the country's first officially designated Private Protected Area and superb a haven for local wildlife.

Cloud forest is found in tropical mountains that are low enough for trees to grow, but high enough to be covered in almost permanent cloud, drenching them in warm, humid drizzle. It is one of the most species rich habitats on the planet, and Bellavista is no exception with a bewildering array of exotic insects, birds, frogs and lizards.

The beautiful bird above is a masked flowerpiercer which gets its name from its habit of stealing nectar from cloud forest flowers. The reason plants produce nectar of course, is to encourage insects and birds to visit and in doing so carry their pollen to another flower so they can reproduce. But flowerpiercers have worked out how to get the nectar without having to carry any pollen... by cutting a hole in the side with the special hook on the tip of their beak and sucking it straight out!

There are also lots of mammals in the cloud forest, from jaguars and ocelots to monkeys, sloths and tapirs, but by far the cutest is the agile little kinkajou. They're nocturnal and keep to the tree-tops so are rarely seen, but they do have a weakness for a ripe banana. The Bellavista staff have been putting banana out each evening ever since the lodge opened and the kinkajous started appearing earlier and earlier to make sure they got their share... so these days they're turning up well before dusk, allowing me to photograph this little fellow in broad daylight.

If you're interested, you can read the report of my latest Ecuador trip including both the high Andes and Bellavista cloud forest here:

<https://hughlansdown.com/html/home/068-ecuador.html>



Kinkajou (Potos flavus)

The Books

The process of updating the books with new graphics and on-line media is almost complete now. I'm still waiting on the publishers for paper copies of the latest version of *Wildlife of the World - Costa Rica*, but the eBook versions of all four books are [available on Amazon now](#) as well as [Apple Books](#), [Google Play Books](#) etc. at just £1.49 each.

I hope you enjoyed this newsletter. As always, I would love to hear if you have any suggestions or ideas for future editions. So until next month...

Best Wishes,

Hugh

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