



We saw Sylph, Sword Bills, Racket Tails, Purple Coronets, and perhaps ten more species. The system of a flash synced to the camera indeed captured the amazing contortions of these birds.



Day trips to nature preserves and even to the 13,000 foot alto plano fields resulted in seeing Tucan, Ibis and even grub eating Caracara. Our base of operation for the second half of the trip was the Guango lodge on the eastern slope of the Andes.

13,000 snaps later we found ourselves home sorting, deleting and remembering the lessons and fun. Some photos are on our website now and I sense a coffee table book for our family in the near future.



Thank you Bruce, Anne, Polina, Henry, Danny, Denise, Jan and Mike for banana gram evenings, laughter over dinner & libations and sharing your talent and excitement for photography. Bruce's experiment was a complete success.

And we all have the T-Shirts and WOW photos to prove it.



THE INK ZONE

Ink Zone # 139

Spring, 2012

We rose early, loaded two suit cases plus a pair of heavy duffels into the truck and hefted camera bags on our backs as we stuffed passports and dreams into multi-pocketed vests. After parking and help from younger lads hoisting our stuff, we checked into a delayed flight that connected in Miami to a flight later than we had expected finally depositing us in the old Quito airport. Having cashed in frequent traveler miles for seats up front, we had a few nice meals, wine and even a pillow to nap with.

Ecuador Cloud Forest Birds

Uneventfully we soon found ourselves in Quito at midnight with almost every other airplane on the continent spewing people into lines measured in hours with no patience. Once stamped in, we found our ride and soon enough, a firm bed in a quaint hotel. Our arrival was a day early thinking there might be fun things to do in the city near the equator. Thus began our hummingbird photography adventure!



Almost a year after we first took an acceptable photo of a moving bird, we received an unexpected call inviting us to join four other couples on a bird photography trip to the Cloud Forests of Ecuador. Lead by one of the worlds leaders in bird photography, Bruce Taubert, the intrigue of the trip was to learn to take photos of hummingbirds! Viewing Bruce's web site and knowing many of the people he invited, it was easy to accept. Traveling as friends and couples proved to be the perfect recipe for fun, laughs and great photos. Of the ten people, seven had serious camera equipment. Oh and we did bring other special equipment as well. Designed by leader Bruce, the stands, wires, flashes, PVC pipes and printed back drops were all part of the plan to return home with WOW photos. And we all did!



Those birds are fast and I had the vision of super high shutter speeds on the camera connected to the best lenses ever made. Not quite, but then again there are tricks and special set ups that make it happen. The photo here is not a collection of birds composited in Photoshop, it is how the lens found them. While not a magazine acceptable photo because of the shadows cast on the background, this is a good example of what we were able to do, all of us, some with expensive cameras and big lenses and others with more modest gear.

We left the hotel early and drove northwest to the Tandayapa birding lodge. A long steep stone stairway ends at a beautiful lodge complete with breathtaking views of the cloud forest and more than a dozen over-populated hummingbird feeders. Hoisting the welcoming drink,

we all stood inches from tens of birds at each feeder. None of us could resist the temptation of snapping a few photos of the feeders and the cloud of wings erupting as they competed for the nectar.

Soon Bruce had us unpacking the gear and one by one he set up a total of four 'stations' where we could take turns taking photos and photos and more photos. The set up consists of some sort of back drop, printed or natural, at least three flash units positioned so as not to cast a shadow, along with a feeder or flower, and wires leading to our cameras set back far enough so as not to interrupt the birds quest for sugar! At first Bruce helped us each with the camera settings and focusing, while teaching us when to click and what might well make a memorable photograph. After some practice we all were more useful in setting up the equipment and thus freeing our leader to do more photography as well.



In some cases we used real flowers that attracted the flights of birds and at other setups we used small feeders that were later replaced by flowers in Photoshop. Soon we all grasped the concept that capturing movement was more desirable than just their snouts in the flower.