



# Reef & Rainforest



## **The Birds, Bugs & Wildlife of Ecuador's Amazon and Cloud Forests**

Accompanied by the BBC's **Dr George McGavin**

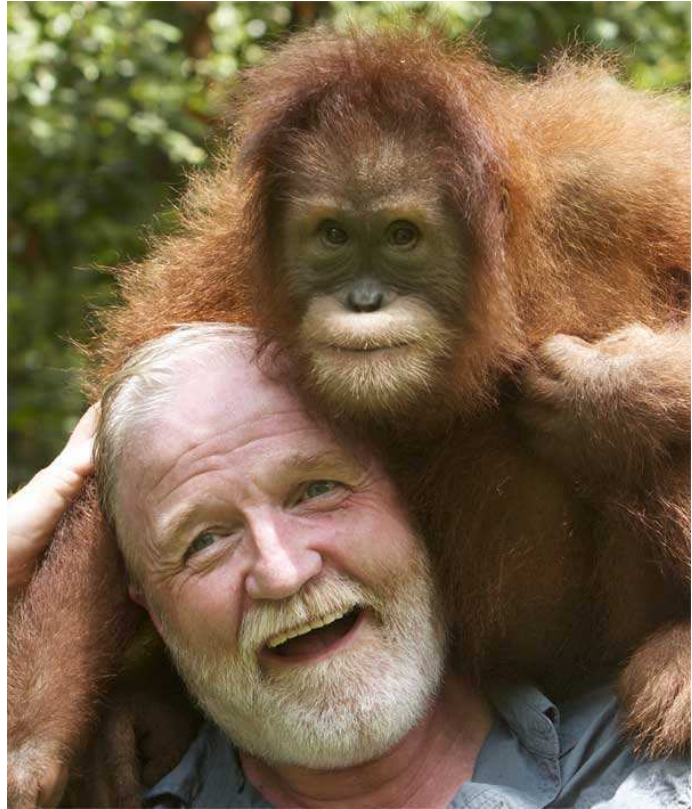
Led by Ecuadorian naturalist guide **Roberto Cedeño**

**20<sup>th</sup> November to 03<sup>rd</sup> December, 2020**

**Accompanied by BBC Natural History Presenter:**

## **Dr George McGavin**

Many of you will recognise Dr George McGavin as a popular TV zoologist with a particular passion for the 'small majority', the invertebrate species that make up most of life on Earth. Born in Glasgow and educated at Daniel Stewart's College in Edinburgh, he studied Zoology at Edinburgh University followed by a PhD in entomology at Imperial College and the Natural History Museum in London. After 25 years as an academic at Oxford University, George became a television presenter, chiefly for the BBC. George is an Honorary Research Associate of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and a Senior Principal Research Fellow at Imperial College as well as a Fellow of the Linnean Society and the Royal Geographical Society and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology.



George's TV credits include: (BBC) Expedition Borneo; Lost Land of the Jaguar; Lost Land of the Volcano; Lost Land of the Tiger; The Dark: Nature's Night-time World; Prehistoric Autopsy; Miniature Britain; Planet Ant; Ultimate Swarms; Dissected: The Incredible Human Hand and Foot; Monkey Planet; The Secret Life of Your House (ITV) and the multi-award winning documentary After Life: The Strange Science of Decay.

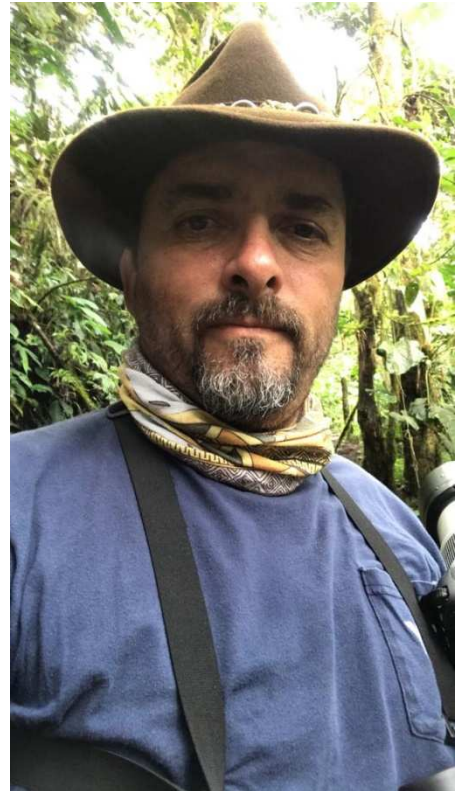
Recent programme credits include the RTS and Grierson award-winning documentary, The Oak: Nature's Greatest Survivor; Nature's Turtle Nursery: Inside the Nest; and The Secret Life of Landfill: A Rubbish History. George is a regular presenter on BBC's The One Show and has written numerous books on insects and other animals. In 2019 he became the President of the Dorset Wildlife Trust

George's boundless enthusiasm, energy and charm are clearly evident from his TV appearances and he will certainly bring those qualities to bear when helping the group members to observe the abundant invertebrate wildlife to be found in Ecuador, as well as larger species such as monkeys and sloths, as well as many of the 1,600 or so species of birds found there. Join George and a small number of like-minded natural history enthusiasts on this uniquely enjoyable journey to the New World and come home with far more knowledge of the hidden (and more visible) wildlife of the tropics than you ever thought possible. If the client feedback from his 2017 and 2018 Costa Rica group tours are anything to go by, you are in for a truly wild and rewarding time.

## Your Local Group Leader, Expert Birder and Naturalist Guide:

### Roberto Cedeño

"I was born in Quito, Ecuador, and grew up in the countryside, always surrounded by nature, riding horses and assisting on my father's farm. When I reached the age of 17 I did a high school exchange year in Iowa. I returned to Ecuador in 1989 and began to guide after receiving relevant training. Shortly after, I was invited to become a naturalist guide in the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest, where I worked there full time for five years, afterwards becoming a freelance guide. Having led many bird tours, I now work as an accredited National Guide. In addition to having a guiding license for almost all the parks and protected areas in Ecuador, I have acted as an instructor on several naturalist and specialised guide courses. I have also led many long distance horse-riding tours, as my hobby is horseback riding with a passion for taming them. I have worked with many top USA-based adventure travel companies for three years. Currently, I help certify aspiring professional guides at a higher tourism institute, the ITHI, which is endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism. Additionally, I lead photographic groups from Asia and guide on a freelance basis in several Latin American countries, including Mexico, Brazil and Colombia.



My 30 years of experience and guiding knowledge have allowed me to gain a deep professional appreciation of my country's natural heritage. Today, aged 49 and with three children, I am passionate about revealing the many attractions to be found in the small, ecologically rich and intriguingly complex country that is my Ecuador. Please join me on this wonderful journey into the heart of my country.





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## DESCRIPTION OF THE ITINERARY

Most of our clients are interested in general natural history – Mother Nature in all her marvellous manifestations. They tend to be fascinated by the entire panoply of living things; from baobabs to baboons, from cacti to coral reefs. That said, there are often certain types of wildlife that are of particular individual interest, such as birds, say, or big cats.



During this varied and comprehensive itinerary you will be accompanied by George McGavin, an accomplished biologist who specialises in invertebrates (insects, arthropods and arachnids) and Roberto Cedeño, a naturalist guide of 30 years' experience with a particular passion for birds. It is safe to say that, should you be keen on insects and spiders as well as hoatzins and hummingbirds, you will be in excellent company on this small group tour.

However, both George and Roberto equally appreciate nature in the round, and are keen to show group members all the variety of Ecuador's fauna and flora, not just entomological and avian species. But we should warn you: George will be on a personal mission to find and photograph a peanut-headed bug (look it up).

In any case, you should see three-toed sloths, up to eight species of monkeys, various snakes, lizards and caiman, and a great many of Ecuador's 1,600 bird species. You will also be introduced to the hidden fauna of the tropics which normally escapes attention. These creatures are

much less like us than, say, mammals or birds. Apart from their often bizarre appearance, they usually boast fascinating natural histories too. Many are also incredibly beautiful: think blue morpho butterflies and the exquisite colours displayed by dragonflies and damselflies.

Whatever you see on this trip, it will undoubtedly be varied, exotic, colourful, bizarre and fascinating. With George and Roberto on hand, you will learn so much more than on a normal natural history tour.

Call John Melton now on 01803 866965 for more details – places are limited to just twelve.



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## The Birds, Bugs & Wildlife of Ecuador's Amazon and Cloud Forests

Fri 20 NOV Met on arrival in QUITO and transfer to your hotel where your local group leader, Roberto Cedeño, will give a trip briefing.

O/n HACIENDA JIMENITA. D. This historic hacienda has been owned and run by the same family for over a century, and is just 15 minutes from Quito's international airport. It is set in 18 acres of private land with native plantations of trees, organic gardens, walking trails, old tunnels, volcano views, and up to 10 species of hummingbirds.

The charming main building is full of antique furniture, with comfy seating areas, a dining room, bar area, and covered porch for al fresco dining. Some of the rooms are located in the main building, and there is also a separate block of newer rooms. There is no TV, safety deposit box or minibar in the rooms.



Sat 21 NOV After breakfast transfer to QUITO AIRPORT and fly to FRANCISCO DE ORELLANA (aka COCA).

Met on arrival and drive to the river port. Transfer by motorised canoe along the NAPO RIVER and cruise for around two hours downstream to the lodge dock. Walk (approx. 30 mins) along boardwalks through the rainforest, accompanied by George, Roberto and local guides who will stop to spot wildlife, to Pilchicocha Lagoon. Take a short canoe trip across to SACHA LODGE, your jungle home for the next FOUR nights.



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O/n SACHA LODGE. B, L, D. The lodge has a beautiful position overlooking the oxbow lake that offers excellent swimming, piranha fishing and gentle wildlife viewing by dugout canoe. The surrounding primary rainforest has large concentrations of monkeys (including squirrel monkeys, red howler monkeys, brown capuchins, black mantled tamarins and pygmy marmosets), an incredible 587 species of birds (including hummingbirds, toucans, parrots and rainforest raptors), sloths and a huge variety of other rainforest mammals, insects and plants.



There is a butterfly farm, a large network of rainforest trails, and excursions on the lake to spot wildlife. A highlight of the lodge is a 940 foot long canopy walkway suspended 95 feet above the ground which, combined with the lodge's 135 foot observation tower, gives unparalleled views over the rainforest and excellent chances for spotting monkeys, sloths and hundreds of canopy birds.



With large thatched wooden cabins, the lodge blends perfectly with the surrounding rainforest yet offers a high level of comfort including private bathrooms with hot water, well screened rooms and an excellent restaurant. All of the rooms are linked by raised and covered boardwalks keeping you a respectable distance from the surrounding forest.



Sun 22 NOV Enjoy a full programme of inclusive activities accompanied by George, Roberto and the local guides from the lodge. Ecuador has one of the richest insect faunas anywhere in the world. Species to look out for include stalk-eyed flies, giant silk moths, owl butterflies, moss-mimicking stick insects, green-gold scarab beetles, assassin bugs, stingless bees - the list is endless.

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Activities here will include trail hikes, excursions on the lake, and visits to the canopy walkway and observation tower. Night walks with an ultraviolet torch may reveal scorpions in a new light when you see their exoskeletons



fluoresce bright blue. O/n SACHA LODGE. B, L, D.

Mon 23 NOV Another day of guided wildlife excursions accompanied by George, Roberto and the local guides. O/n SACHA LODGE. B, L, D.

Tue 24 NOV Enjoy a final day of guided rainforest excursions accompanied by George, Roberto and the local guides. O/n SACHA LODGE. B, L, D

Wed 25 NOV After breakfast, paddle across the lake and walk back to the Napo River to meet your motorised canoe transportation back to COCA. Here you will board a minibus and begin your journey by road (2 hrs) into the Andean foothills.

Time permitting, begin exploring the area accompanied by George and Roberto in the late afternoon. Treehoppers are one of George's favourite insect families and you will discover many of these marvellous masters of disguise, whose bizarre shapes can take your breath away. Roberto meanwhile will be searching for some of his avian favourites to show you.



O/n WILDSUMACO LODGE. B, L, D. The lodge is located in the upper tropical zone on a ridge in the eastern foothills of the Andes at an elevation of 1,480 metres. There are far reaching views across the Rio Pucuno Valley to the Andes beyond and on clear days there are views of the El Altar, Tungurahua, Antisana and, to the north, Sumaco volcanoes.

The lodge, and the private reserve it sits within, was created by a group of passionate conservationists and birders from the USA and Sweden. Their aim is to preserve and protect the rainforest that is under increasing threat from clearance for farms and pastures. They have also established a non-profit arm, the Rio Pucuno Foundation, and through it have opened a biological research station.



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The lodge has two cabanas with a total of eight twin and two double ensuite rooms located either side of a separate building with a large, open dining and sitting area complete with bar and fireplace. Outside there is a partially covered 22 metre-long deck overlooking the Rio Pucuno Valley and across to the Andes to the west. The meals feature international home-style cooking, and soft drinks, beer and wine are available to purchase from the bar. There is an extensive, well-maintained trail system accessible directly from the lodge, with other trails located a short drive away.



With its unique mix of birds from both the tropics and the cooler subtropical regions this area has the highest species diversity in the mountains. The reserve, which encompasses elevations of 1,200 to 1,600 metres, has a bird list numbering almost 500 cloud forest species, foothill specialties, and Amazonian species, including 27 species of hummingbirds, and a great diversity of tanagers.



Most of Wildsumaco's mammals are shy or nocturnal and usually difficult to see, though the Napo (or black-mantle) tamarin is spotted fairly frequently.

Thu 26 NOV Spend today exploring the area accompanied by George and Roberto looking for birds and insects. Just birding around the lodge's deck is excellent and the street light on the driveway attracts a further variety of bird life. Hummingbird species attracted by the feeders include Napo sabrewing, Gould's jewelfront, black-throated and violet-fronted brilliant, many-spotted hummingbird, and golden-tailed sapphire. Small-billed hummers like gorgeted woodstar and wire-crested thorn-tail feed on the porterweed around the lodge. In the evening look for band-bellied and mottled owl, great potoo, and scorpions. O/n WILDSUMACO LODGE. B, L, D.



Fri 27 NOV Enjoy another day exploring the area accompanied by George and Roberto. O/n WILDSUMACO LODGE. B, L, D.

Sat 28 NOV A final day to explore the area accompanied by George and Roberto. O/n WILDSUMACO LODGE. B, L, D.



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Sun 29 NOV Say farewell to San Wildsumaco and, with packed lunch in hand, ascend the eastern side of the Cordillera Guacamayos towards the Andes with George and Roberto.

On a clear day there are wonderful views of the forested valleys stretching towards the Amazonian lowlands. En route to your next lodge perhaps explore the pristine cloud forest of the Guacamayos Ridge Trail.



The lodge is located in the heart of the wet subtropical zone at an altitude of about 2,050 metres. This is an area that Frank Chapman, renowned early 20th century US ornithologist and pioneering writer of field guides, described as follows:

*“It is remarkable not alone for the richness of its life but for the high percentage of species found only within its boundaries. Protective coloration is at a discount in the Subtropical Zone. The density of vegetation protects and, among arboreal birds at least, color unchecked runs riot. Every day brought beautiful creatures we had never seen before.”*

O/n CABANAS SAN ISIDRO, B, L, D. The lodge was founded over 50 years ago by the Bustamante family from Quito when the Ecuadorian government began making the unchartered eastern lands available to the general public to convert to farms. However, rather than clear the land for farming Simon Bustamante left the majority of his 1,100 hectares, plus a further 800 hectares which was bought by the Bustamante's local foundation, untouched. Today the lodge is set amongst large, accessible tracts of primary cloud forest and is overseen by Simon's daughter, Carmen.



The lodge sits in the picturesque Quijos Valley which is one of the westernmost headwaters of the Amazon basin. There are 13 comfortable en-suite rooms surrounded by a sprawling garden, all with a private porch, hummingbird feeder and sitting area. There is a cosy living room in the main house and a separate dining room serving a delicious fusion of traditional Ecuadorian and international cuisine. There is also a comfortable mirador lounge. WiFi is available in the dining room and additional amenities include a pool table, TV room, book exchange, darts and a laundry service.

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The lodge has a number of well-maintained forest trails and the immediate surroundings, including the forested roadsides, boasts a bird list of about 330 species. There is a diversity of other wildlife, including large mammals, though these are shy and less predictable. Some of the mammals that are seen with more regularity include night monkey, kinkajou and black agouti, a large rodent.

Mon 30 NOV Spend the day exploring the area accompanied by George and Roberto. George will be on the lookout for the harlequin beetle (*Acrocinus longimanus*), a huge longhorn beetle. Early naturalists thought that the ridiculously long legs of the males allowed them to swing from branch to branch but the reality is far more interesting. Other showy beetles include *Euchroma gigantea*, a brightly coloured jewel beetle.



San Isidro is considered to be one of the best places to go birdwatching in the rich subtropical zone which has mixed feeding flocks, a diversity of hummingbirds and many other special possibilities including masked trogon, Andean cock of the rock and powerful woodpecker. Night walks can also be arranged to search for nocturnal mammals, as well as San Isidro owl and scorpions. O/n CABANAS SAN ISIDRO, B, L, D.



Tue 1 DEC Enjoy a final day exploring the area accompanied by George and Roberto. O/n CABANAS SAN ISIDRO. B, L, D.

Wed 2 DEC Continue ascending by road with George and Roberto to GUANGO LODGE. Here you can enjoy the stunning variety of hummingbirds that come to the lodge's feeders. Normally 10-15 species can be seen including the incredible sword-billed hummingbird and tourmaline sunangel. Look out also for the white-capped dipper and torrent duck, often found on the river next to the lodge.



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After lunch continue climbing towards the Papallacta Pass which is at an elevation of over 4,000 metres. Depending on how you and the group are feeling, hike to a paramo lake containing silvery grebe, Andean ruddy duck and Andean coot. Then continue driving over the pass and descend to your accommodation in Quito's LOS CHILLOS VALLEY. In the evening relive your wildlife adventures over a delicious farewell dinner (2 drinks included with the meal). O/n HACIENDA JIMENITA. B, L, D.

Thu 3 DEC This morning is at leisure to pack, relax and explore the hotel's 18 acres on your own. For those interested in exploring Quito's colonial centre a guided tour can be arranged (additional cost). In the afternoon transfer to QUITO AIRPORT in time for the international flight. B, L.

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Maximum Number of Participants: 12

Minimum Number: 8

Price: £5,118 per person sharing double/twin accommodation - international flights not included.

Single Supplement: £525

To include: domestic flights, accommodation, transfers, nearly all meals, all tours and excursions as stated, reserve entrance fees, private transportation with experienced driver, services of Dr George McGavin and Roberto Cedeño and various local guides, government taxes and service charges.

Not included: international flights, tips, drinks (except with farewell dinner), optional city tour in Quito, items of a personal nature and travel insurance.

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Please call John Melton for more details on 01803 866965 or email us at [mail@reefandrainforest.co.uk](mailto:mail@reefandrainforest.co.uk)



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## IMPORTANT NOTES TO ACCOMPANY THE ABOVE ITINERARY

**NB:** It is currently envisaged that George McGavin and Roberto Cedeño will be accompanying this group and they have agreed to do so, but should there be any unforeseen reason or eventuality which leads to either of them being unable to be with the group, suitable alternative people will be chosen to take their place.

**NB:** The above tentative itinerary and its quoted price are based on specific hotels and lodges. Should there be insufficient availability at the time of booking, alternative hotels and lodges of a similar standard may have to be booked instead, in which case the itinerary and/or price may change.

**NB:** Prices are based on specific airlines and specific seating classes. The price may change if those are not available at the time of booking. We strongly advise booking early to secure the prices quoted, particularly as the seating classes quoted for are usually the first to be filled.

**NB:** The quoted price for the above itinerary is based on current airline fares, fuel surcharges and flight taxes. These (and other tour costs) may be subject to unanticipated increases beyond our control at short notice, either before or after you have booked the tour, in which case the price would need to be revised accordingly.

**NB:** Prices are based on standard rooms unless otherwise stated in the itinerary. Should you wish to upgrade please let us know.

**NB:** All itineraries are subject to change without notice to take into account possible airline flight schedule changes which can take place before departure date or during the tour, and other operational factors.

**NB:** Inclusive tours and excursions as stated in the itinerary will have been pre-paid. Once full payment has been made and/or clients are actually at their destination, should clients be disinclined to partake of any inclusive tour or excursion, no refunds will be possible.

**NB:** Meals are provided as follows B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner.

**NB:** Activities described as OPTIONAL are not included in tour price.

**NB:** Yellow fever vaccination is recommended for this country. This may not be suitable for people aged over 60 who have not been vaccinated before. If this applies to you, please seek medication advice prior to booking.

**NB:** Before and after booking, clients must familiarise themselves with current UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advisories so as to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of the destination(s) to be visited in this itinerary. All decisions relating to the tour will be based on UK FCO advisories, and not those of any other countries' governments. In the event of any emergency or other problem encountered in the destination, it is advisable if appropriate to contact the local UK Embassy, High Commission or Consulate for assistance. The FCO in London also has dedicated telephone call centres: Crisis Management Dept - 0207 008 5335 (during UK office hours), and Global Response Centre - 0207 008 1500 (out of UK office hours).

**NB:** Please ensure your passport has six months validity from the date of entry.

**NB:** It is a condition of booking that full travel insurance including Emergency repatriation is taken out by each person travelling. Your insurance cover must also include Missed Departure and/or Missed Flight Connection for both outbound and return flight sectors. Please also ensure your insurance covers the entire cost of the holiday.

**NB:** Some service providers may require that guests sign an indemnity waiver form and may refuse services if these forms are not signed. Reef and Rainforest Tours cannot give refunds for services not provided due to a refusal to sign such forms.

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## Reef and Rainforest Tours Ltd.

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