



American Citizen Services

U.S. Embassy • Quito, Ecuador

ISSUE 2

MARCH 15, 2011

ECUADOR BY THE NUMBERS:

- Number of bird species in Ecuador: 1,640
- Number (as a percentage) of the world's known bird species: 15 percent
- Number of hummingbird species: 130
- Number of threatened bird species: 50
- Number (in meters) of the wingspan of Ecuador's national bird - the Andean Condor: 3

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Extracted from: "Feathered Friends: Ambassador's Hobby Strengthens Environmental Diplomacy" in STATE Magazine

February 2011—When most tourists visit Ecuador, their itineraries include the Galapagos Islands and historic Quito. When U.S. Ambassador to Ecuador Heather Hodges is sight-seeing, she often travels off the beaten track with a guide to see the birds of Ecuador.

Ecuador is home to more than 1,600 of the world's 10,000 bird species (versus around 900 species in North America). Ambassador Hodges' marked-up, weather-beaten field guide reveals that she has seen about a third of the country's species since arriving in August 2008.

The Ambassador's birding knowledge and her growing interest in biodiversity and wildlife conservation have made her welcome in Ecuador's active environment and conservation circles. In late 2010, she brought together federal and municipal government officials, nongovernmental organizations and private foundations to jointly work to secure land for a new national wildlife reserve that will help protect watersheds and rare bird species, including Ecua-

dor's national bird, the Andean Condor. For the 2010 Independence Day celebration of the U.S. Embassy in Quito, Ambassador Hodges designated the Jocotoco Foundation and the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation as organizations where guests could send donations in lieu of the flowers traditionally offered on na-



Ambassador Hodges during her visit to Bellavista, a private rainforest reserve in Pichincha province

tional days in Ecuador. Representatives of both foundations said they were pleased with the attention and recognition generated. Her interest has also encouraged American companies to become more involved in environmental issues in the country.

Ambassador Hodges said she likes to engage Americans and Ecuadorians about the importance of conservation and the richness of Ecuador's natural

patrimony. "I especially like to talk about birding and the environment with students," she said. "It is important they gain an appreciation for how unique and abundant the wildlife here is, and that they recognize that their country is a special place."

Local media outlets have reported on the Ambassador's birding forays. On a recent trip, a television camera crew followed Hodges and U.S. ornithologist Paul J. Greenfield as they birdwatched and talked about conservation efforts in Mindo. Several journalists said they were impressed with Hodges' knowledge and appreciation for the country's flora and fauna, and were surprised to observe the variety of birds in the cloud forest less than two hours from Quito.

Ambassador Hodges summed it up best: "Not only have I enjoyed seeing an amazing array of gorgeous birds here, but through this hobby I have really come to appreciate this stunning country and have met some remarkable Americans and Ecuadorians who are committed to preserving the habitat and wildlife here."

ACS Outreach Meeting Held in Baños

On February 8, the Consular Section from the U.S. Embassy in Quito visited Baños for an outreach meeting to U.S. citizens. The primary purpose of the visit was to discuss with U.S. citizens, tourists and local tour operators how to best prepare for natural disasters and what kind of response they can expect from the U.S. Embassy. The meetings were held in a “town hall” format with opening remarks by the Mayor of Baños, followed by a technical presentation from Ecuador’s Geophysical Insti-

tute and a Consular presentation on Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Re-



ACS Presentation in Baños

sponse by Consul General, Jennifer Savage. Sessions were held in Spanish and English, each with question and answers after. Consular

services, such as passport renewals, notarizations, and Federal Benefits sign-up were offered as well.

The Consular Section is planning similar town hall meetings in the near future to a variety of locations in Ecuador. By enrolling in the “Smart Traveler’s Enrollment Program” (STEP), U.S. citizens can assure they will be notified of upcoming town hall meetings. Visit www.travel.state.gov for more information on STEP.

Outreach Meeting in Riobamba

DATE: Tuesday,

March 15

TIME: 4:00 p.m.

LOCATION:

Seminario Biblico –
Manuel Elicio Flor
4427 y Epiclichima
in Riobamba

Outreach Meeting Planned for Riobamba March 15

The next outreach meeting for the American Citizen Services section of the U.S. Embassy in Quito is set for Tuesday, March 15, 2011, in Riobamba.

The meeting will start at 4:00 p.m. with the first presentation in Spanish. The English presentation will begin at 6:00 p.m., followed by ACS services at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will

be held at the Seminario Biblico – Manuel Elicio Flor 4427 y Epiclichima.

Please let us know if you are interested in hosting such a session in your community.

New CRBA’s Available to US Citizens

The Department of State has developed a new Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) (Form FS-240) certificate and adjudication process. CRBAs are available to U.S. citizens born abroad who acquire U.S. citizen-



ship at birth through U.S. citizen parent(s).

While U.S. citizens will not see any major differences in the application process, the internal processes and appearance of the document will make the CRBA a more secure document, make the application process more customer-friendly and streamlined while maintaining anti-

fraud measures, and will create a centralized printing process.

The Consular Section is available to help you report the birth of your child abroad. Visit our websites for appointment information: Quito: <http://ecuador.usembassy.gov/service.html> and Guayaquil: <http://guayaquil.usconsulate.gov/service.html>

Consul General's Corner - From CG Jennifer Savage

Busy season has come early to the Consular Section in Quito. Overall we processed 50 percent more visas in January 2011 over the same month last year. Demand and subsequent wait times for a visa interview are increasing in the coming months. Our busy season for visas normally runs through July; this year it may run into August or September if the increased demand is sustained.

In the Consular Section, we are thinking strategically to better serve you in the busy season. We have implemented an online appointment system for American Citizen Services, similar to the visa appointment system with the exception that appointments are scheduled on our website. While many of you were used to our walk-in services, allow me to assure you that the appointment system has reduced the amount of time U.S. citizens wait

and is improving turnaround time for document delivery.

We are also looking at staffing. Each summer about half of our team of Consuls, who are U.S. Foreign Service Officers, rotate to new postings, and new officers come to Quito. We are carefully working with our team to ensure minimal disruption to services.

Finally, we are making sure that we are prepared to assist in times of crisis. We continue building relationships with the Secretaria de Riesgos, local police and prison authorities as well as local hospitals and medical service providers throughout the country. We constantly review plans for major disasters and have had crisis drills. We are also conducting preparedness outreach sessions to communities with large concentrations of U.S. citizens.

Unfortunately, the spring and early

summer busy season is common to many Embassies and Consulates worldwide as U.S. citizens abroad head home to visit family over the summer, students travel for summer jobs or studies and families head off to Disney World for summer vacation. This means that no matter how hard we try, wait times for non-emergency services will occasionally grow. This is where we ask you to help us serve you better by planning ahead, coming to the Embassy with forms and supporting documents fully prepared, and spreading the word. Check those passport expiration dates now so you're not caught unprepared the night before you're set to leave for your trip. However, be rest assured that serving U.S. citizens is our highest priority. We work hard to facilitate the entry of foreign nationals seeking to enter the U.S., but YOU, our fellow Americans,

“Only purchases made at businesses displaying the tax free logo and properly documented on the receipt (factura) for \$50 and above can be reimbursed.”

US Citizens Can Receive Cash Back on VAT



Beginning in 2011, the government of Ecuador began a program to reimburse tourists for the 12 percent Value-

Added Tax or VAT (Impuesto al Valor Agregado or IVA in Spanish) on hotel bills and the purchase of national products of more than \$50. Only purchases made at businesses displaying the tax free logo (above) and properly docu-

mented on the receipt (factura) for \$50 and above can be reimbursed. To request the reimbursement, the purchaser must bring the goods and receipt(s) to the “SRI-CAE” desk, located past immigration control in the Quito airport or at the international pre-boarding lobby in the Guayaquil airport. While purchases can be made with cash or credit card, reimbursements will be only be credited to the tourists’ Visa or Master Card. The credit card must be in the name of the

tourist and the same name must be reflected on the receipt(s).

The program requirements are still being developed by the government and changes can be expected. A current list of participating businesses and more information can be found at the program’s website: <http://www.sri.gob.ec/web/10138/356>

Bureau of Consular Affairs: “Secure Borders, Open Doors” - Contact Us:

Telephone number: **(011 593-2) 398-5000.**

Public call-in hours are Monday through Thursday 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. and Friday 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

For after-hours emergencies, call **(011 593-2) 398-5200.**

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