

Birdwatching in Ecuador: Analysis of Birdlife on the Bucay-Chillanes Highway

Observación de aves en Ecuador: Análisis de la avifauna en la carretera Bucay-Chillanes

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the bird diversity along the Bucay-Chillanes route, located between the provinces of Guayas and Bolívar in Ecuador, as a potential site for developing ornithological tourism. Despite its high biodiversity, the area remains underutilized due to a lack of adequate infrastructure and promotion, which has limited its appeal as a birdwatching destination. Through a qualitative, descriptive approach based on non-participant observation and interviews, the study identifies a wide range of bird species of interest for both national and international tourists, including iconic species such as the Cock-of-the-rock and the Golden-headed Quetzal. These findings underscore the region's potential as an ideal location for birdwatching, a tourism modality that not only provides a unique recreational experience but also contributes to biodiversity conservation and local sustainable development. The article calls for the urgent implementation of strategies that balance habitat conservation with tourism growth, including infrastructure enhancement, local guide training, and stronger national and international promotion. Ornithological tourism is presented not only as a leisure activity but also as an economic driver capable of diversifying the local tourism offer and generating tangible benefits for surrounding communities. However, unlocking this potential requires a sustainable development model that integrates environmental protection with strategic promotion efforts. Only through this balance can Bucay-Chillanes emerge as a successful destination for birdwatchers while safeguarding the well-being of both local bird populations and the human communities that coexist with them.

Keywords: Birdwatching tourism, avian biodiversity, ornithological tourism, Guayas (Ecuador), ecotourism.

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza la diversidad de aves a lo largo de la ruta Bucay-Chillanes, ubicada entre las provincias de Guayas y Bolívar en Ecuador, como un sitio potencial para el desarrollo del turismo ornitológico. A pesar de su alta biodiversidad, la zona sigue estando subutilizada debido a la falta de infraestructura adecuada y promoción, lo que ha limitado su atractivo como destino para la observación de aves. A través de un enfoque cualitativo y descriptivo basado en la observación no participante y entrevistas, el estudio identifica una amplia variedad de especies de interés para turistas nacionales e internacionales, incluyendo especies icónicas como el Gallo de la Peña y el Quetzal Cabecidorado. Estos hallazgos destacan el potencial de la región como un lugar ideal para el aviturismo, una modalidad turística que no solo ofrece una experiencia recreativa única, sino que también contribuye a la conservación de la biodiversidad y al desarrollo sostenible local. El artículo hace un llamado urgente a implementar estrategias que equilibren la conservación de los hábitats con el crecimiento turístico, incluyendo mejoras en infraestructura, capacitación de guías locales y una promoción más efectiva a nivel nacional e internacional. El turismo ornitológico se presenta no solo como una actividad de ocio, sino también como un motor económico capaz de diversificar la oferta turística local y generar beneficios tangibles para las comunidades del entorno. Sin embargo, para concretar este potencial, es necesario adoptar un modelo de desarrollo sostenible que integre la protección ambiental con estrategias de promoción eficaces.

Palabras clave: Aviturismo, biodiversidad aviar, turismo ornitológico, Guayas (Ecuador,) ecoturismo.

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the potential for birdwatching tourism in the Bucay and Chillanes region, in the provinces of Guayas and Bolívar, Ecuador. The study examines the rich avifaunal biodiversity of this area, which although being underutilized, can be a source to develop specialized tourism that contributes to the diversification of tourism offerings and local economic development. This work arises in part from the observation that, despite the large number of bird species present, an effective strategy for providing ornithological tourism has not been implemented, resulting in a loss of economic and conservation opportunities.

The literature review reveals the importance of the Bucay-Chillane highway as an ecological corridor of high biodiversity, particularly in relation to birdlife. Previous studies highlight the importance of areas such as the La Esperanza Humid Forest, which is home to numerous bird species. However, the lack of adequate infrastructure and the limited promotion of the region as a birdwatching tourism destination limit its potential. In this context, birdwatching tourism is not only presented as a recreational activity, but also as a key tool for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

The methodological approach of this study is qualitative and based on direct, non-participant observation, complemented by interviews with specialized guides in the region. Preliminary results indicate that Bucay-Chillane has a rich birdlife, including species highly valued by both the national and international markets, such as the Rock Cock-of-the-Rock and the Golden-headed Quetzal. The identification of these species and their behavior in their natural habitat demonstrates the region's great tourist appeal, underscoring the need to develop strategies to promote birdwatching tourism in the area, benefiting both local communities and ecosystem conservation.

OBJECT OF THE STUDY

In the Bucay and Chillanes region, in the provinces of Guayas and Bolívar, Ecuador, there is a significant underutilization of the tourism potential related to birdwatching. Despite the rich biodiversity and the presence of numerous

bird species, this natural resource has not been adequately exploited as a recreational and tourism option. This has led to a lack of development of ornithological tourism, a segment with high growth potential that could diversify and strengthen the area's tourism offering. Ornithological tourism represents a unique opportunity to diversify the tourism offering in the sector, attracting a niche market interested in nature and birdwatching. However, the lack of promotion and adequate development has prevented this activity from becoming a sustainable source of income and conservation. Implementing a strategic approach that combines biodiversity conservation with tourism development can not only effectively leverage this natural resource but also contribute to the environmental sustainability and economic diversification of the region.

The Bucay and Chillanes region lacks adequate infrastructure to accommodate tourists interested in birdwatching, such as marked trails, viewpoints, specialized guides, and information centers. Furthermore, there is limited local and national knowledge about the value of the area's birdlife as a tourist attraction, which limits investment and promotion of the area as a destination for ornithological tourism. Added to this is the lack of effective promotional strategies highlighting Bucay and Chillanes as prime birdwatching destinations, thereby reducing the attraction of specialized birdwatching tourists. Finally, local stakeholders, such as guides and tour operators, are insufficiently trained in birdwatching tourism, which diminishes the quality of the experience offered to visitors. The underutilization of the natural resource, represented by the region's rich birdlife, leads to a significant loss of opportunities for local economic development. In addition, the lack of adequate development of birdwatching tourism negatively impacts the local economy, which could otherwise be benefited by the spending of specialized tourists. Likewise, the absence of a sustainable tourism strategy could generate an adverse long-term environmental impact, affecting both bird populations and their habitats. Finally, the lack of development in this sector also contributes to the limited diversification of tourism offerings in the provinces of Guayas and Bolívar, which continue to rely heavily on more conventional and less specialized forms of tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

About the studied geographical space

The General Antonio Elizalde (Bucay)-Chillanes highway is a strategic road in Ecuador that connects the province of Guayas with the province of Bolívar, crossing a mountainous region of the Andes. This route is vital for both trade and tourism, facilitating the transport of agricultural products and providing access to rural areas of great natural and cultural appeal. The highway offers spectacular scenery, including views of mountains, rivers, and lush vegetation, making it a popular route for tourists seeking to explore the biodiversity and ecotourism opportunities in the region (Ministry of Transport and Public Works of Ecuador [MTOPE], 2023).

Figure 1. Location of the Bucay – Chillanes road.



Note. Taken from Google Maps.

The Chillanes canton, located in the province of Bolívar, Ecuador, is a region characterized by its geographic and cultural diversity. This canton is located in a mountainous area of the Ecuadorian Andes, giving it a varied climate that ranges from temperate in the lower reaches up to cold at the highest altitudes. Its economy is primarily based on agriculture, with notable production of coffee, corn, and fruits grown on its fertile lands. Furthermore, Chillanes is known for its cultural richness, with traditions and festivities that reflect the identity of its inhabitants, many of whom are of indigenous origin (GAD Chillanes, 2023). Tourism in Chillanes has begun to develop, primarily in areas related to nature and culture. The region offers natural attractions such as rivers, waterfalls, and mountains, making it an ideal destination for ecotourism and adventure. Birdwatching tourism has also gained importance, as the area's biodiversity includes a significant variety of birds, which attracts enthusiasts and specialists. Despite being a small

canton, Chillanes is in the process of strengthening its tourism offering, taking advantage of its natural and cultural resources in order to attract visitors (GAD Chillanes, 2023).

The General Antonio Elizalde canton, commonly known as Bucay, is located in the Guayas province of Ecuador. This canton lies in the inter-Andean region, at the transition between the coast and the Ecuadorian highlands, providing it with a warm, humid climate with abundant rainfall. Bucay is known for its lush vegetation and mountainous landscapes, serving as a meeting point for the biodiversity of the coast and the Andes. The canton's economy is based on agriculture, with crops such as of cocoa, coffee, and bananas, as well as livestock and emerging tourism (GAD Bucay, 2022). Tourism in Bucay has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by its natural attractions and accessibility from major cities such as Guayaquil. The canton offers a variety of outdoor activities, including hiking, mountain biking, and water sports on its rivers and waterfalls. Furthermore, Bucay is an emerging destination for birdwatching tourism, thanks to its rich birdlife. Tourism development in Bucay has focused on promoting its natural resources, with a focus on sustainability and ecotourism, seeking to balance economic growth with environmental conservation (GAD Bucay, 2022).

The La Esperanza Humid Forest, located along the General Antonio Elizalde (Bucay) - Chillanes highway in Ecuador, is an area of great ecological richness and biodiversity. This forest is located in the inter-Andean region, where high humidity and constant fog have given rise to a cloud forest ecosystem. The vegetation is dense and varied, with a wide range of flora species, including orchids, ferns, and endemic trees, which provide vital habitats for numerous fauna species, especially birds and amphibians. This natural environment is a refuge for endangered species and it is a popular destination for ecotourism and birdwatching (EcoCiencia, 2022). The La Esperanza Humid Forest is not only important for its biodiversity but also for its role in conserving water resources and regulating the local climate. The area is part of an ecological corridor that connects different ecosystems between the coast and the Andes, contributing to the environmental balance of the region. Tourism in this area has been developed with a focus on

sustainability, promoting activities such as hiking, flora and fauna observation, and environmental education, with the aim of protecting this valuable ecosystem while fostering the economic development of local communities (EcoCiencia, 2022).

Introduction to Birdwatching Tourism

Definition and characteristics of birdwatching tourism

Birdwatching tourism has established itself as an important ecotourism option, offering a unique experience that goes beyond simple birdwatching. Specialization in this type of tourism is crucial, as both tourists and local guides must have in-depth knowledge of bird species and their behaviors. In this sense, the combination of scientific interest and the enjoyment of wildlife observation underscores the essential role of birdwatching tourism in environmental conservation. As the authors note:

Birdwatching is a specialized form of tourism that focuses on observing birds in their natural habitat. This type of tourism attracts not only ornithology enthusiasts and experts, but also tourists interested in nature and conservation. Through birdwatching, knowledge and appreciation of biodiversity are fostered, while contributing to the local economy and ecosystem conservation (Buckley, 2009, p. 56).

Birdwatching tourism is defined as a recreational activity that involves observing and studying birds in their natural environment. This type of tourism requires a high level of specialization both by tourists and local guides, who must have in-depth knowledge of bird species, their behavior, and the best places and times to observe them. It is a form of tourism that combines the pleasure of wildlife observation with scientific interest and environmental conservation (Steven, Morrison, & Castley, 2015, p. 89).

It can be concluded that birdwatching tourism is emerging as a specialized form of ecotourism that not only allows birdwatching in its natural environment but also fosters an appreciation of biodiversity and contributes to local economic

development. This type of tourism requires a high level of specialization on the part of both tourists and local guides, who must possess in-depth knowledge of the species and their behaviors. Furthermore, the combination of scientific interest with the pleasure of wildlife observation highlights the importance of this tourism segment in environmental conservation. But birdwatching tourism doesn't only occur in wild spaces; natural environments have adapted to cities, as the author notes:

Birdwatching tourism is a specialized segment of ecotourism, which bases its activities on the observation of birds in their natural environment. Urban spaces, with their varying gradients, have become habitats for many bird species, making the city their "home." This type of tourism not only encourages recreation but also promotes environmental awareness and the sustainable use of natural resources (López, 2021, p. 190).

This activity is distinguished by its low environmental impact and significant contribution to biodiversity conservation (CEUPE, 2023). Unlike mass tourism, birdwatchers tend to demonstrate greater environmental awareness and respectful behavior toward local fauna and flora, minimizing the disturbance of natural habitats. This activity also actively promotes environmental education and generates crucial income for supporting local communities and reinvesting in projects to protect avian habitats (Andina, 2024). The fundamental characteristics of birdwatching tourism include an intrinsic focus on nature, the need for specialized guides with in-depth knowledge of the species and their behaviors, and the use of specific equipment such as binoculars, telescopes, and field guides for non-invasive observation.

In short, birdwatching tourism is distinguished by its focus on environmental preservation and its ability to educate visitors about biodiversity. Its low environmental impact and the generation of income for habitat protection underscore its ecological and economic value, establishing it as a sustainable and enriching alternative to mass tourism.

Importance of birdwatching tourism in biodiversity conservation

Conservation agencies recognize the role of birdwatching tourism in biodiversity conservation, as it "fosters an appreciation for wildlife and generates resources that can be reinvested in the conservation of natural habitats" (BirdLife International, 2018, p. 15). Furthermore, the promotion of birdwatching tourism has been shown to directly influence the implementation of effective conservation practices in destinations (Selin & Ewel, 2004). Finally, the environmental education and awareness-raising that emerge from birdwatching tourism are crucial for the protection of endangered species and promoting biodiversity awareness (Kiss, 2004).

Similarly, researchers and activists emphasize that birdwatching tourism plays a crucial role in biodiversity conservation by promoting education and awareness about the importance of birds and their habitats. This type of tourism not only encourages birdwatching but also contributes significantly to ecosystem conservation by generating income for wildlife protection. It is characterized by its low environmental impact and encourages the active participation of local communities, fundamental elements for sustainability and the effective conservation of natural resources (Vera Fernández et al., 2024).

Successful birdwatching tourism destinations

Ecuador is globally recognized for its bird diversity, making it a prime destination for birdwatching tourism. Ecuador is globally recognized for its exceptional avian biodiversity, hosting a considerable number of species, making it one of the richest birdlife countries in the world within a relatively small geographic area (Vera Fernández et al., 2024). This wealth of birdlife attracts tourists from around the world, seeking to experience birdwatching in their natural habitats. Mindo-Nambillo is one of the most successful destinations for birdwatching tourism in Ecuador. Mindo is a clear example of the potential of birdwatching in Ecuador, standing out for its high concentration of bird species and for having developed an adequate tourism infrastructure, including specialized guides and accommodations designed for birdwatchers (Carrión, 2021). This has allowed

the area to become a reference point for birdwatchers, contributing to the local economy and environmental conservation. Another prominent destination for birdwatching tourism is Yasuni National Park, considered one of the most biodiverse in the world. Yasuni National Park is a site of exceptional biodiversity in the Ecuadorian Amazon, home to an extraordinary concentration of bird species that makes it a prime destination for tourists interested in the region's unique birdlife (Jácome & Yáñez-Muñoz, 2023). The park not only offers exceptional birdwatching opportunities but also plays a vital role in the conservation of Amazonian ecosystems.

This success is due not only to its rich biodiversity but also to the conservation efforts implemented over the years. In Argentina, the province of Misiones has emerged as an important destination for birdwatching tourism, with Iguazú National Park offering "an unparalleled experience for bird lovers, thanks to its rich biodiversity and stunning landscapes" (Córdoba, 2020, p. 15). This destination attracts tourists from all over the world, interested in observing rare and endangered species. Colombia and Peru stand out as leading destinations for birdwatching tourism, thanks to their rich biodiversity and focus on conservation. The success of birdwatching tourism in Latin America is attributed to its exceptional avian biodiversity and the conservation efforts implemented (Vera Fernández et al., 2024). In the region, destinations such as the province of Misiones in Argentina, particularly the Iguazú National Park, have established themselves as nerve centers for birdwatching, offering unique experiences due to their rich birdlife and landscapes (Posdeley, 2024). Similarly, Colombia and Peru stand out as leaders in this tourism segment. Colombia's Coffee Region is an example of how the great diversity of birds attracts international visitors, and the region has been identified for its profitable and beneficial conservation potential (Mongabay, 2016). In Peru, Manu National Park is a key destination, recognized for its vast species diversity and its contribution to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage (SERNANP, 2010). This development of birdwatching routes in various Latin American countries not only enriches the tourist experience but also directly contributes to the conservation of local ecosystems and promotes

the economic development of the communities that safeguard these natural resources (López Sánchez, 2022). Although Yellowstone National Park in the United States offers a model for integrating birdwatching into its tourism activities in order to promote environmental education and conservation (similar to the approach of Latin American parks), the primary focus of the Latin American region centers on the combination of biodiversity, active conservation, and community involvement as pillars of this tourism modality (Community Birdwatching Group of the Americas, n.d.). This approach has allowed visitors to appreciate birdlife while simultaneously raising awareness about ecosystem conservation.

Birdwatching tourism development

Birdwatching tourism and environmental conservation

Birdwatching tourism, a specialized form of ecotourism focused on observing birds in their natural habitats, has emerged as a powerful tool for environmental conservation. This tourism modality not only attracts birdwatching enthusiasts but also raises awareness about the importance of protecting the ecosystems where these species live. The relationship between birdwatching tourism and environmental conservation lies in tourism's potential to fund conservation projects, promote sustainable development in local communities, and strengthen biodiversity preservation efforts. Through responsible practices and proper management, birdwatching tourism can significantly contribute to the protection of natural habitats and ecological balance. As Zalles (2018) comments:

Nature-based tourism can promote biological conservation to the extent that it achieves sufficient local incentives in order to reduce extractive pressure on living resources and to establish land-use patterns conducive to maintaining wildlife habitats. (p. 194)

In this context, a well-preserved natural environment with rich and preserved biodiversity has become a highly attractive resource for tourism. Integrating the environmental dimension, it can offer a new business opportunity and a clear competitive

advantage for tourism development in natural and rural areas. Sustainable tourism, such as birdwatching tourism, should be used as a key tool for the protection and conservation of natural resources (López, 2008). Therefore, the use of conserved areas in protected areas is essential for the activity.

López (2015) proposes that, although birdwatching is rapidly developing in Ecuador as an ecotourism product, it has a low economic and high environmental impact. This is mainly due to the low level of organization, lack of technical preparation, limited research into available natural resources, and limited promotion in tourism markets. The author emphasizes the importance of improving these aspects in order to harness the tourism potential of birdlife, specifically in the rural areas bordering the province of Guayas.

METHODOLOGY

The study's methodological design is based on a qualitative approach, allowing for a deep understanding of the diversity of birds in this region and its relationship to birdwatching tourism. The study is exploratory and descriptive in scope, involving the collection of information on the bird species present and the context in which this tourism activity takes place. This research was conducted as a non-experimental study. Direct, non-participant observation allowed researchers to record the behavior and characteristics of bird species without disturbing their natural environment. This technique was applied in 53 observation sessions distributed across two locations: 28 sessions in Esperanza Alta and 25 on the Camino a la Cascada de Piedra Blanca. The sessions were held in the morning and afternoon, over a specific period, in order to ensure representative observations at different times of the day.

To structure and systematize data collection, two key instruments were used: the checklist and the field journal.

Checklist: This instrument was used to accurately and orderly record the bird species observed during each session. The checklist allowed researchers to note the presence or absence of target species in the different transects, as well as any relevant behavior.

Field Diary: Complementing the checklist, the field diary was used to qualitatively document the observations made. This instrument allowed for the recording of contextual details, such as weather conditions, species interactions, and any other significant data that could contribute to a more in-depth analysis of the avifauna at the studied locations. Two transects were established at the aforementioned locations in order to structure the observation sessions:

Esperanza Alta Transect (via Bucay - Chillanes, Bolívar): This transect comprised 28 observation sessions spread across different times of the day. Observations were made both in the early morning and in the afternoon in order to capture variations in birds activities.

Transect on the Road to Piedra Blanca Waterfall (Guayas): 25 observation sessions were conducted along this transect, also in the

morning and afternoon. As with the Esperanza Alta transect, the goal was to understand the diversity of species present at different times of the day. The information was complemented with records obtained from bibliographic sources and databases on local birdlife.

To enhance the findings, in-depth interviews will be conducted with expert guides working in the town of Bucay, Chillanes. These interviews will provide insights about the importance of birdwatching tourism in the region, as well as about conservation practices and knowledge of bird species. The interviews will be structured around open-ended questions that encourage discussion and sharing of the guides' experiences. The data collected will be analyzed qualitatively, seeking to identify recurring patterns and themes that contribute to a better understanding of birdwatching tourism in bird conservation in Ecuador.

RESULTS

Bird species present

Table 1. Birdlife identified in Bucay – Chillanes.

Common name in Spanish	Common name in English	Scientific name
Chachalaca (Guacharaca) Cabecirrufa	Rufous-headed Chachalaca	<i>Ortalis erythroptera</i>
Pava Crestada	Crested Guan	<i>Penelope purpurascens</i>
Pava Ala de Hoz	Sickle-winged Guan	<i>Chamaepetes goudotii</i>
Pauraque	Common Pauraque	<i>Nyctidromus albicollis</i>
Guácharo	Oilbird	<i>Steatornis caripensis</i>
Vencejo Cuellicastaño	Chestnut-collared Swift	<i>Streptoprocne rutila</i>
Vencejo Cuelliblanco	White-collared Swift	<i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i>
Vencejo Lomigrís	Gray-rumped Swift	<i>Chaetura cinereiventris</i>
Vencejo Colicorto	Short-tailed Swift	<i>Chaetura brachyura</i>
Vencejo Tijereta Menor	Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift	<i>Panyptila cayennensis</i>
Jacobino Nuquiblanco	White-necked Jacobin	<i>Florisuga mellivora</i>
Pico de Hoz Puntiblanco	White-tipped Sicklebill	<i>Eutoxeres aquila</i>
Ermitaño Golilistado	Stripe-throated Hermit	<i>Phaethornis striigularis</i>
Ermitaño Bigotiblanco	White-whiskered Hermit	<i>Phaethornis yaruqui</i>
Ermitaño Piquilargo	Long-billed Hermit	<i>Phaethornis longirostris</i>
Piquicuña Goliblanca	White-throated Daggerbill	<i>Schistes albogularis</i>
Orejivioleta Menor	Lesser Violetear	<i>Colibri cyanotus</i>
Hada Coronipúrpura	Purple-crowned Fairy	<i>Heliathryx barroti</i>
Colicorda Verde	Green Thorntail	<i>Discosura conversii</i>
Colibrí Jaspeado	Speckled Hummingbird	<i>Adelomyia melanogenys</i>
Silfo Colivioleta	Violet-tailed Sylph	<i>Agelaiocercus coelestis</i>

Inca Pardo	Brown Inca	<i>Coeligena wilsoni</i>
Colarraqueta de Botas Blancas	White-booted Racket-tail	<i>Ocreatus underwoodii</i>
Brillante Pechianteado	Fawn-breasted Brilliant	<i>Heliodoxa rubinoides</i>
Brillante Coroniverde	Green-crowned Brilliant	<i>Heliodoxa jacula</i>
Heliomáster Piquilargo	Long-billed Starthroat	<i>Heliomaster longirostris</i>
Estrellita Chica	Little Woodstar	<i>Chaetocercus bombus</i>
Esmeralda Occidental	Western Emerald	<i>Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus</i>
Ninfa Coronada	Crowned Woodnymph	<i>Thalurania colombica</i>
Amazilia Colirrufa	Rufous-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia tzacatl</i>
Amazilia Ventrirrufa	Amazilia Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia amazilia</i>
Amazilia Andina	Andean Emerald	<i>Uranomitra franciae</i>
Colibrí Ventrivioleta	Violet-bellied Hummingbird	<i>Chlorestes julie</i>
Garrapatero Piquiliso	Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i>
Garrapatero Piquiestriado	Groove-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga sulcirostris</i>
Cuclillo Crespín	Striped Cuckoo	<i>Tapera naevia</i>
Cuco Ardilla	Squirrel Cuckoo	<i>Piaya cayana</i>
Cuco Ventrinegro	Black-bellied Cuckoo	<i>Piaya melanogaster</i>
Paloma (Torcaza) Collareja	Band-tailed Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas fasciata</i>
Paloma Ventripálida	Pale-vented Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas cayennensis</i>
Paloma Rojiza	Ruddy Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas subvinacea</i>
Tortolita Ecuatoriana	Ecuadorian Ground Dove	<i>Columbina buckleyi</i>
Paloma Apical	White-tipped Dove	<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>
Tórtola Orejuda	Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>
Polluela Goliblanca	White-throated Crane	<i>Laterallus albigularis</i>
Carrao	Limpkin	<i>Aramus guarauna</i>
Garceta Sol	Sunbittern	<i>Eurypyga helias</i>
Cormorán Neotropical (Pato Cuervo)	Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum brasilianum</i>
Garza Tigre Castaña	Rufescent Tiger-Heron	<i>Tigrisoma lineatum</i>
Garza Tigre Barreteada	Fasciated Tiger-Heron	<i>Tigrisoma fasciatum</i>
Garcilla Estriada	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
Garceta (Garza) Bueyera	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Garceta Grande (Blanca)	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Garceta Nívea	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>
Gallinazo Negro	Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>
Gallinazo Cabecirrojo	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
Elanio Coliblanco	White-tailed Kite	<i>Elanus leucurus</i>
Elanio Cabecigrís	Gray-headed Kite	<i>Leptodon cayanensis</i>
Elanio Piquiganchudo	Hook-billed Kite	<i>Chondrohierax uncinatus</i>
Elanio Tijereta	Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>
Elanio Bidentado	Double-toothed Kite	<i>Harpagus bidentatus</i>
Azor Enano	Tiny Hawk	<i>Microspizias superciliosus</i>
Elanio Caracolero	Snail Kite	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>
Gavilán Sabanero	Savanna Hawk	<i>Buteogallus meridionalis</i>
Gavilán Barreteado	Barred Hawk	<i>Morphnarchus princeps</i>

Gavilán Campestre (Caminero)	Roadside Hawk	<i>Rupornis magnirostris</i>
Gavilán Gris	Gray-lined Hawk	<i>Buteo nitidus</i>
Gavilán Aludo	Broad-winged Hawk	<i>Buteo platypterus</i>
Gavilán Colicorto	Short-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo brachyurus</i>
Mochuelo del Pacífico (Peruano)	Peruvian Pygmy-Owl	<i>Glaucidium peruanum</i>
Quetzal Cabecidorado	Golden-headed Quetzal	<i>Pharomachrus auriceps</i>
Trogón Collarejo	Collared Trogon	<i>Trogon collaris</i>
Trogón Enmascarado	Masked Trogon	<i>Trogon personatus</i>
Martín Pescador Verde	Green Kingfisher	<i>Chloroceryle americana</i>
Martín Pescador Grande	Ringed Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle torquata</i>
Momoto Gritón	Whooping Motmot	<i>Momotus subrufescens</i>
Momoto Rufo	Rufous Motmot	<i>Baryphthengus martii</i>
Momoto Piquiancho	Broad-billed Motmot	<i>Electron platyrhynchum</i>
Barbudo Frentinaranja	Orange-fronted Barbet	<i>Capito squamatus</i>
Barbudo Cabecirrojo	Red-headed Barbet	<i>Eubucco bourcierii</i>
Tucanete Lomirrojo	Crimson-rumped Toucanet	<i>Aulacorhynchus haematopygus</i>
Arasari Piquipálido	Collared Aracari	<i>Pteroglossus torquatus</i>
Tucán del Chocó	Choco Toucan	<i>Ramphastos brevis</i>
Tucán Goliamarillo	Yellow-throated Toucan	<i>Ramphastos ambiguus</i>
Carpintero Carinegro	Black-cheeked Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes pucherani</i>
Carpintero Dorsiescarlata	Scarlet-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates callonotus</i>
Carpintero Pardo	Smoky-brown Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates fumigatus</i>
Carpintero Olividorado	Golden-olive Woodpecker	<i>Colaptes rubiginosus</i>
Carpintero Lineado	Lineated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus lineatus</i>
Carpintero Guayaquileño	Guayaquil Woodpecker	<i>Campephilus gayaquilensis</i>
Halcón Reidor (Valdivia)	Laughing Falcon	<i>Herpetotheres cachinnans</i>
Halcón Montés Barreteado	Barred Forest-Falcon	<i>Micrastur ruficollis</i>
Halcón Cazamurciélagos (Murcielaguero)	Bat Falcon	<i>Falco ruficularis</i>
Perico Cachetigrís	Gray-cheeked Parakeet	<i>Brotogeris pyrrhoptera</i>
Loro Cabeciazul	Blue-headed Parrot	<i>Pionus menstruus</i>
Loro Alibronceado	Bronze-winged Parrot	<i>Pionus chalcopterus</i>
Amazona Harinosa	Mealy Parrot	<i>Amazona farinosa</i>
Periquito del Pacífico	Pacific Parrotlet	<i>Forpus coelestis</i>
Perico Caretirrojo	Red-masked Parakeet	<i>Psittacara erythrogenys</i>
Trepatroncos Tiranino	Tyrannine Woodcreeper	<i>Dendrocincla tyrannina</i>
Trepatroncos Pardo	Plain-brown Woodcreeper	<i>Dendrocincla fuliginosa</i>
Trepatroncos Piquicuña	Wedge-billed Woodcreeper	<i>Glyphorhynchus spirurus</i>
Trepatroncos Punteado	Spotted Woodcreeper	<i>Xiphorhynchus erythropygius</i>
Trepatroncos Montano (Montañero)	Montane Woodcreeper	<i>Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger</i>
Xenops Dorsillano	Plain Xenops	<i>Xenops minutus</i>
Hornero del Pacífico	Pacific Hornero	<i>Furnarius cinnamomeus</i>
Limpiafronda Goliescamosa	Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner	<i>Anabacerthia variegaticeps</i>
Limpiafronda Lineada	Lineated Foliage-gleaner	<i>Syndactyla subalaris</i>
Limpiafronda Frentianteada	Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner	<i>Dendroma rufa</i>

Trepamusgos Uniforme	Uniform Treehunter	<i>Thripadectes ignobilis</i>
Trepamusgos Gorrillado	Streak-capped Treehunter	<i>Thripadectes virgaticeps</i>
Rondamusgos Estriado Occidental	Western Woodhaunter	<i>Automolus virgatus</i>
Subepalo Moteado	Spotted Barbtail	<i>Premnoplex brunnescens</i>
Colaespina Carirroja	Red-faced Spinetail	<i>Cranioleuca erythroptera</i>
Colaespina Pizarrosa	Slaty Spinetail	<i>Synallaxis brachyura</i>
Colaespina de Azara	Azara's Spinetail	<i>Synallaxis azarae</i>
Hormiguerito Lomirrufo	Rufous-rumped Antwren	<i>Euchrepomis callinota</i>
Hormiguerito Pizarroso	Slaty Antwren	<i>Myrmotherula schisticolor</i>
Batará Unicolor	Uniform Antshrike	<i>Thamnophilus unicolor</i>
Batará Coroninegro	Black-crowned Antshrike	<i>Thamnophilus atrinucha</i>
Batará Mayor	Great Antshrike	<i>Taraba major</i>
Hormiguero Oscuro	Dusky Antbird	<i>Cercomacroides tyrannina</i>
Hormiguero Dorsicastaño	Chestnut-backed Antbird	<i>Poliocrania exsul</i>
Hormiguero Cabecigrís	Gray-headed Antbird	<i>Ampelornis griseiceps</i>
Tiranolete Coronitizado	Sooty-headed Tyrannulet	<i>Phyllomyias griseiceps</i>
Tiranolete Silbador Sureño	Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet	<i>Camptostoma obsoletum</i>
Tiranillo Alirrufo	Rufous-winged Tyrannulet	<i>Mecocerculus calopterus</i>
Tiranolete de Tumbes	Tumbes Tyrannulet	<i>Nesotriccus tumbezanus</i>
Tiranolete Amarillo	Yellow Tyrannulet	<i>Capsiempis flaveola</i>
Tirano Enano Carileonado	Fulvous-faced Scrub-Tyrant	<i>Euscarthmus fulviceps</i>
Mosquerito Olivirrayado	Olive-striped Flycatcher	<i>Mionectes galbinus</i>
Mosquerito Gorripizarroso	Slaty-capped Flycatcher	<i>Leptopogon superciliaris</i>
Mosquerito Flavecente	Fluorescent Flycatcher	<i>Myiophobus flavicans</i>
Mosquerito Pechirrayado	Mouse-gray Flycatcher	<i>Myiophobus crypterythrus</i>
Mosquerito Adornado	Ornate Flycatcher	<i>Myiorticcus ornatus</i>
Cimerillo Crestiescamado	Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant	<i>Lophotriccus pileatus</i>
Espatulilla Común	Common Tody-Flycatcher	<i>Todirostrum cinereum</i>
Picoancho Azufrado	Yellow-olive Flatbill	<i>Tolmomyias sulphurescens</i>
Mosquerito Canelo	Cinnamon Flycatcher	<i>Pyrrhomyias cinnamomeus</i>
Mosquerito Pechigrís	Gray-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Lathrotriccus griseipectus</i>
Febe Guardarríos	Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>
Pibí Boreal	Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>
Pibí Ahumado	Smoke-colored Pewee	<i>Contopus fumigatus</i>
Pibí Occidental	Western Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>
Tirano de Agua Enmascarado	Masked Water-Tyrant	<i>Fluvicola nengeta</i>
Mosquero Alicastaño	Rusty-margined Flycatcher	<i>Myiozetetes cayanensis</i>
Mosquero Social	Social Flycatcher	<i>Myiozetetes similis</i>
Mosquero Ventriamarillo	Golden-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes hemichrysus</i>
Mosquero Rayado	Streaked Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes maculatus</i>
Mosquero Picudo	Boat-billed Flycatcher	<i>Megarynchus pitangua</i>
Tirano Goliníveo	Snowy-throated Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus niveigularis</i>
Tirano Tropical	Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>
Copetón Crestioscuro	Dusky-capped Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tuberculifer</i>

Frutero Escamado	Scaled Fruiteater	<i>Ampelioides tschudii</i>
Gallo de la Peña Andino	Andean Cock-of-the-rock	<i>Rupicola peruvianus</i>
Mosquerito Lomiazafrán	Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher	<i>Myiobius sulphureipygius</i>
Titira Coroninegra	Black-crowned Tityra	<i>Tityra inquisitor</i>
Tirira Enmascarada	Masked Tityra	<i>Tityra semifasciata</i>
Cabezón Canelo	Cinnamon Becard	<i>Pachyramphus cinnamomeus</i>
Cabezón Críptico	Cryptic Becard	<i>Pachyramphus salvini</i>
Cabezón Unicolor	One-colored Becard	<i>Pachyramphus homochrous</i>
Vireón Cejirrufo	Rufous-browed Peppershrike	<i>Cyclarhis gujanensis</i>
Vireón Piquinegro	Black-billed Peppershrike	<i>Cyclarhis nigrirostris</i>
Vireo Chiví	Chivi Vireo	<i>Vireo chivi</i>
Vireo Gorripardo	Brown-capped Vireo	<i>Vireo leucophrys</i>
Golondrina Musliblanca	White-thighed Swallow	<i>Atticora tibialis</i>
Golondrina Azuliblanca	Blue-and-white Swallow	<i>Pygochelidon cyanoleuca</i>
Golondrina Alirasposa Sureña	Southern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx ruficollis</i>
Martín Pechipardo	Brown-chested Martin	<i>Progne tapera</i>
Martín Pechigrís	Gray-breasted Martin	<i>Progne chalybea</i>
Golondrina Tijereta	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Soterrey Ondeado	Fasciated Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus fasciatus</i>
Soterrey Bigotillo (Bigotudo)	Whiskered Wren	<i>Pheugopedius mystacalis</i>
Soterrey Cabecipinto	Bay Wren	<i>Cantorchilus nigricapillus</i>
Soterrey Criollo	House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
Soterrey Montés Pechigrís	Gray-breasted Wood-Wren	<i>Henicorhina leucophrys</i>
Perlita Cejiblanca	White-browed Gnatcatcher	<i>Poliptila bilineata</i>
Solitario Andino	Andean Solitaire	<i>Myadestes ralloides</i>
Zorzal Moteado de Sclater	Speckled Nightingale-Thrush	<i>Catharus maculatus</i>
Zorzal de Swainson	Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>
Mirlo Ojipálido	Pale-eyed Thrush	<i>Turdus leucops</i>
Mirlo Ecuatoriano	Ecuadorian Thrush	<i>Turdus maculirostris</i>
Cinco Gorriblanco	White-capped Dipper	<i>Cinclus leucocephalus</i>
Jilguero Ventriamarillo	Yellow-bellied Siskin	<i>Spinus xanthogastrus</i>
Jilguero Encapuchado	Hooded Siskin	<i>Spinus magellanicus</i>
Eufonia Coroninaranja	Orange-crowned Euphonia	<i>Euphonia saturata</i>
Eufonia Ventrinaranja	Orange-bellied Euphonia	<i>Euphonia xanthogaster</i>
Clorospingo Goliamarillo	Yellow-throated Chlorospingus	<i>Chlorospingus flavigularis</i>
Clorospingo Golicinéreo	Ashy-throated Chlorospingus	<i>Chlorospingus canigularis</i>
Saltón Negrilistado	Black-striped Sparrow	<i>Arremonops conirostris</i>
Saltón Piquinaranja	Orange-billed Sparrow	<i>Arremon aurantirostris</i>
Matorralero Gorricastaño	Chestnut-capped Brushfinch	<i>Arremon brunneinucha</i>
Chingolo (Gorrión Criollo)	Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>
Matorralero del Chocó	Tricolored Brushfinch	<i>Atlapetes tricolor</i>
Matorralero Aliblanco	White-winged Brushfinch	<i>Atlapetes leucopterus</i>
Cacique Lomiamarillo	Yellow-rumped Cacique	<i>Cacicus cela</i>
Cacique Lomiescarlata	Scarlet-rumped Cacique	<i>Cacicus uropygialis</i>

Bolsero Coliamarillo	Yellow-tailed Oriole	<i>Icterus mesomelas</i>
Vaquero Brilloso	Shiny Cowbird	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>
Negro Matorralero	Scrub Blackbird	<i>Dives warczewiczi</i>
Reinita Protonotaria	Prothonotary Warbler	<i>Protonotaria citrea</i>
Antifacito Carinegro	Black-lored Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis auricularis</i>
Antifacito Coronioliva	Olive-crowned Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis semiflava</i>
Parula Tropical	Tropical Parula	<i>Setophaga pitaiayumi</i>
Reinita Pechinaranja	Blackburnian Warbler	<i>Setophaga fusca</i>
Reinita Lomiantada	Buff-rumped Warbler	<i>Myiothlypis fulvicauda</i>
Reinita Grisidorada	Gray-and-gold Warbler	<i>Myiothlypis fraseri</i>
Reinita Coronirrojiza	Russet-crowned Warbler	<i>Myiothlypis coronata</i>
Reinita Cabecilistada	Three-striped Warbler	<i>Basileuterus tristriatus</i>
Candelita Goliplomiza	Slate-throated Redstart	<i>Myioborus miniatus</i>
Tangara Carinegruzca	Dusky-faced Tanager	<i>Mitrospingus cassinii</i>
Piranga Roja	Summer Tanager	<i>Piranga rubra</i>
Piranga Aliblanca	White-winged Tanager	<i>Piranga leucoptera</i>
Tangara Pechiocrácea	Ochre-breasted Tanager	<i>Chlorothraupis stolzmanni</i>
Picogrueso Dorado (Huiracchuro)	Golden Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus chrysogaster</i>
Mielero Verde	Green Honeycreeper	<i>Chlorophanes spiza</i>
Tersina (Tangara Golondrina)	Swallow Tanager	<i>Tersina viridis</i>
Dacnis Carinegro	Black-faced Dacnis	<i>Dacnis lineata</i>
Saltador Listado	Streaked Saltator	<i>Saltator striatipectus</i>
Saltador Golianteado	Buff-throated Saltator	<i>Saltator maximus</i>
Saltador Alinegro	Black-winged Saltator	<i>Saltator atripennis</i>
Mielero Flavo	Bananaquit	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>
Semillerito Oscuro	Dull-colored Grassquit	<i>Asemospiza obscura</i>
Espiguero Negriazulado	Blue-black Grassquit	<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>
Tangara Hombriblanca	White-shouldered Tanager	<i>Loriotus luctuosus</i>
Tangara Filiblanca	White-lined Tanager	<i>Tachyphonus rufus</i>
Tangara Lomilimón	Flame-rumped Tanager	<i>Ramphocelus flammigerus</i>
Espiguero Variable	Variable Seedeater	<i>Sporophila corvina</i>
Espiguero Ventriamarillo (Ventriamarillento)	Yellow-bellied Seedeater	<i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>
Semillero Piquigrueso	Thick-billed Seed-Finch	<i>Sporophila funerea</i>
Espiguero Gorgicastaño	Chestnut-throated Seedeater	<i>Sporophila telasco</i>
Pinzón Sabanero Azafranado	Saffron Finch	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>
Pinchaflor Flanquiblanco	White-sided Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa albilatera</i>
Tangara Pechianteada (Pechihabana)	Fawn-breasted Tanager	<i>Pipraeidea melanonota</i>
Tangara Montana Aliazul	Blue-winged Mountain Tanager	<i>Anisognathus somptuosus</i>
Tangara Nuquidorada	Golden-naped Tanager	<i>Chalcothraupis ruficervix</i>
Tangara Azuleja	Blue-gray Tanager	<i>Thraupis episcopus</i>
Tangara Palmera	Palm Tanager	<i>Thraupis palmarum</i>
Tangara Capuchiazul	Blue-necked Tanager	<i>Stilpnia cyanicollis</i>
Tangara Cabecibaya	Bay-headed Tanager	<i>Tangara gyrola</i>

Tangara Coronizafrán	Saffron-crowned Tanager	<i>Tangara xanthocephala</i>
Tangara Cariflama	Flame-faced Tanager	<i>Tangara parzudakii</i>
Tangara Dorada	Golden Tanager	<i>Tangara arthus</i>
Tangara Goliplata	Silver-throated Tanager	<i>Tangara icterocephala</i>

Note. Data provided from López, j (2024) <https://ebird.org/lifelists/L3000298> and <https://ebird.org/lifelists/L24683913>

Recreational potential and tourist attraction of bird watching

The resulting list includes a variety of bird species distributed across several taxonomic groups, belonging to multiple orders and families. Notable groups include hummingbirds (Trochilidae), with 23 species. The Bucay-Chillanes area is a biodiversity hotspot, especially for birdwatching, with a remarkable variety of hummingbirds that represent a significant attraction for birdwatchers. Among the species present, such as the White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*), the White-tipped Sicklebill (*Eutoxeres aquila*), and the Violet-tailed Sylph (*Agelaiocercus coelestis*), one can observe a rich diversity of adaptations and unique behaviors that enrich the observation experience. The wide range of hummingbirds in the region not only highlights biodiversity but also allows enthusiasts to observe fascinating interactions, such as courtship rituals and territorial disputes between males. Each species has its own niche and lifestyle, contributing to a complex and dynamic ecosystem that is essential to the local ecological balance. Furthermore, the importance of these species in Bucay-Chillanes goes beyond their beauty and behavior. Hummingbird watching attracts tourists interested in ecotourism, which can generate significant income for the local community and encourage habitat conservation. The presence of species such as the Brown Inca (*Coeligena wilsoni*) and the Long-billed Hermit (*Phaethornis longirostris*) not only creates a tourist attraction but also promotes awareness about the importance of conserving the natural habitats that support these birds. Educational programs and guided activities can help visitors understand hummingbird ecology and the need to protect their environment, generating a positive impact on biodiversity conservation. In this sense, Bucay-Chillanes is positioned as a privileged destination for birdwatching, which not only benefits nature lovers but also supports conservation and sustainable development initiatives in the region. The presence of a remarkable diversity of tanagers in the Bucay-Chillanes region, which includes species such as

the Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*), White-winged Tanager (*Piranga leucoptera*), Ochre-breasted Tanager (*Chlorothraupis stolzmanni*), among others, significantly contributes to its attractiveness as a birdwatching destination. With a total of 15 species of tanagers in this area, birdwatchers are drawn to the rich color palette and behavioral variations of these birds, which are easily identifiable by their distinctive plumage and unique characteristics.

The Tyrannidae family, which includes a remarkable variety of flycatchers and tyrannids. With 31 recorded species, such as the Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher (*Myiobius sulphureipygius*), the Black-tailed Flycatcher (*Myiobius atricaudus*), and the Cinnamon Flycatcher (*Pyrhomyias cinnamomeus*), this area becomes an unparalleled attraction for birdwatchers and ecotourists. The variety of habitats that the region offers, from humid forests to drier areas, allows the coexistence of species such as the Ornate Flycatcher (*Myiobius ornatus*) and the Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet (*Camptostoma obsoletum*), each with unique adaptations that reflect its ecology. What's more, the presence of iconic species such as the Yellow Tyrannulet (*Capsiempis flaveola*) and the Snowy-throated Kingbird (*Tyrannus niveigularis*) not only enriches the viewing experience but also underlines the area's relevance as a biodiversity hotspot.

The presence of emblematic species such as the Andean Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*) and the Golden-headed Quetzal (*Pharomachrus auriceps*) on the Bucay - Chillanes road is of great importance for birdwatching, as it highlights the biodiversity and uniqueness of the local ecosystem, attracts tourists and birdwatchers, encourages conservation efforts of their habitats, offers educational opportunities about biodiversity and can strengthen the cultural connection of local communities with their natural environment, contributing to the development of ecotourism in the region.

The field results, after being reviewed by expert guides, concur with the criteria that interest in birds at a site can be classified according to the

market, such as domestic and international. Domestic tourists are often interested in seeing striking and colorful birds, which, although common or frequent in their area, are fascinating due to the widespread lack of awareness tourists have regarding the birds. Species such as the Golden Tanager and the Violet-tailed Sylph are examples of birds that, although easy to spot, spark great interest among local tourists due to their beauty and relative rarity in everyday life. On the other hand, the international market focuses on species with more limited distributions and specific profiles, such as the Rock Cock-of-the-Rock and the Golden-headed Quetzal, which prove to be major draws for foreign observers. In both cases, the variety of species and the ease of sighting play a key role in the tourist experience, with these birds being a point of attraction for both the national and international public (Arellano, J. personal communication, September 4, 2024)

CONCLUSIONS

The Bucay-Chillanes highway represents a significant bird biodiversity corridor in Ecuador, as evidenced by the high richness and variety of avian species recorded in the area. Hummingbirds (Trochilidae), tanagers (Thraupidae), and flycatchers (Tyrannidae) are among the most prominent taxonomic groups, highlighting the ecological value of the region and positioning it as a strategic site for birdwatching. The presence of species such as the White-necked Jacobin, Violet-tailed Sylph, Summer Tanager, and Cinnamon Flycatcher, along with emblematic birds like the Andean Cock-of-the-rock and the Golden-headed Quetzal, reinforces the uniqueness of this area as a destination for both scientific research and specialized or casual bird tourism.

Moreover, the findings suggest that avian diversity not only contributes to ecological and scientific knowledge but also serves as a key driver for local ecotourism and sustainable economic development. The ability to attract both national tourists, interested in colorful, visually striking birds, and international birdwatchers, focused on species with limited distributions, broadens the region's potential. Validation by expert guides emphasizes the need to strengthen environmental education and interpretation to enhance visitor experience while fostering awareness of habitat

conservation. Bucay-Chillanes thus emerges not only as a site of high ecological and touristic value but also as a model for integrating biodiversity conservation, environmental education, and community-based sustainable development.

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