

Ecuador's most iconic wildlife species



Ecuador is a country where nature still breathes freely, offering a sanctuary for some of the most emblematic species of South America. We can find in the high Andes, the king of the skies—the majestic Andean condor—flying above deep valleys and volcanic cliffs, especially around the Antisana Reserve. With its impressive wingspan that can surpass three meters, the condor represents power, freedom, and cultural identity for many Indigenous communities. Sharing these high-altitude ecosystems is the elegant white-tailed deer, a shy herbivore that lives in páramo grasslands and Andean forests, quietly sustaining the balance of these fragile environments.

Among the most admired species of the Andean region is the Andean bear, also known as the spectacled bear. Ecuador's only bear species, it can reach up to two meters tall when standing and usually weighs between 80 and 140 kilograms, depending on sex and habitat. This amazing giant is an omnivore, with a diet based mostly on fruits, bromeliads, cactus, and occasional small animals. Spotting one is a privilege, as they inhabit dense cloud forests and remote mountain slopes in areas such as the Cayambe-Coca region and the Chocó Andino area, close to Quito. Just to mention a few places where they can be seen. Their presence is essential for forest regeneration, making them a keystone species in our ecosystems.

Further east, the landscape transforms into the lush and vibrant Amazon rainforest, home to an extraordinary diversity of wildlife. Here, the elusive jaguar reigns as the top predator, vital for maintaining the ecological balance of this region. In the river systems, we may encounter the enchanting pink dolphin, a species known for its intelligence, playful nature, and deep connection to local Amazonian cultures. Monkeys, macaws, giant otters, and countless amphibians and insects also contribute to the Amazon's reputation as one of the most biodiverse places on the planet.

Across all these ecosystems—from the páramos to the cloud forests to the Amazon—the conservation of wildlife is not only necessary but urgent. Protecting these species means safeguarding their habitats, supporting community-led conservation efforts, promoting responsible tourism, and encouraging environmental education.

Ecuador's natural heritage is a treasure that belongs to all of us, and its preservation ensures that future generations can continue to admire the incredible biodiversity that makes our country unique.

By Patricia Serrano