



Wildlife of the World Newsletter

January 2026



*Komodo Dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*)*

Happy New Year !

I hope you had a great Christmas and are looking forward to 2026. It's still very cold here in Wales, but there are frogs croaking in the garden pond and a few green shoots starting to appear, so spring is on its way!

I've just finished writing a report on the final leg of my Indonesia adventure, to the islands of Java, Flores and Komodo [which you can read here](#), including video of the formidable Komodo Dragons.

With more than 17,000 islands covering a distance of over 5,000 kilometres, Indonesia is huge, with an incredible range of wildlife. From Australasian echidna, possums and cassowaries in the east, to Asian treeshrews, monkeys and barbets in the west, in my opinion its the most under-rated country in the world for wildlife-watching, and if you haven't been I'd definitely recommend a visit.

Now I'd like to take you from one incredible biodiversity hotspot to another on the opposite side of the world...

Wildlife-watching Sites

Yasuni National Park, Ecuador

Yasuni National Park lies deep in Ecuador's Amazon rainforest, so its no surprise it has a reputation as the most biodiverse place on earth. I spent a superb few days at Sani Lodge, located inside the National Park, which is owned and run by the local Amazonians and its one my favourite places I've ever been!

The wildlife is incredible, with thousands of weird and wonderful insects, a record 150 species of amphibian and nearly 600 species of bird. There are also 170 different mammals including the world's smallest monkey, the cute little pygmy marmoset, and one of the largest, the huge woolly monkey... looking a bit like a huge Sumu wrestler suspended in the treetops!



Pygmy Marmoset

(Cebuella pygmaea)



Woolly Monkey
(Lagothrix lagothricha)

Amongst the amazing variety of birdlife are many different parrots, toucans, kingfishers and eagles including the enormous harpy eagle, but one of the strangest birds is the primitive hoatzin. Large, noisy creatures that feed on leaves and are only found in marshy, flooded areas of the Amazon, they have no relatives alive today and are thought to date back to the time of the dinosaurs. Their chicks are famous for the fact that they will jump out of the nest into the river if danger threatens... then use claws on their wings to climb back up to safety!

You can read a [report of my 2023 trip to Ecuador and Yasuni National Park](#) here.



Hoatzin (Opisthocomus hoazin)

Trips and Books

My next trip is a tour of Uganda at the start of February so there'll be no newsletter next month, but Uganda is probably the best country in the world to see large mammals, so with luck I might have some photos of lions, elephants and gorillas for the March edition.

Please let me know if you have any particular requests or suggestions for future newsletters, and I still have a few review copies of my four published books available if you're interested.

Best Wishes

Hugh



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