

Animals and Plants

Casa Dracula, Quinshul, Chical, Prov. Carchi, Ecuador

Birds

For bird lovers, there are a wealth of interesting places different altitudes between 800 m and 2300 m. The annual bird counts register about 300 species, about 100 of which have been observed around the house. The famous Cock of the Rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*) and the Rufous Motmot (*Baryphthengus martii*) occur directly behind the house. Often in the morning at 8 o'clock a loud shrieking parrot swarm flies over the house on the way from the sleeping place to the food trees. Ornithological literature, field guides, binoculars and a telescope are available in the house.

Mammals

Proven by direct observation and by camera trap: puma, ocelot, jaguarundi, spectacled bear, sloth, three species of monkeys, numerous bats and rodents. In the grove behind the house lives a kinkajou (*Potos flacus*), a nocturnal, tree-dwelling fruit eater that never comes to the ground. One of the monkey species of the Dracula Reserve, which is particularly at risk, is surveyed with a monitoring program. Particularly species-rich are hamster-like rodents, important fruit and seed eaters, which also can spread rainforest trees uphill.

Frogs and Lizards

The forest is inhabited by a broad, but only patchy known spectrum of amphibians and reptiles. Since the foundation of the reserve (2013), several new species of frogs and lizards have been found and described, one of which is named after the reserve (*Anolis dracula*). The forests with their numerous creeks and streams also form a refuge for various endemics, of which only a few localities are known so far.

Insects

Our knowledge of the local insect fauna is very poor. Mosquitoes are much rarer than in many other tropical areas. Large butterflies are frequent, including the Morphos with blue iridescent wings. Interested visitors with prior permission can use a light trap which is stored in the house.

Garden

The interesting, carefully selected and perfectly maintained plants around the house could be called a small botanic garden. It contains some remarkable and rare wild plants from the region, partly planted and partly spontaneous, but deliberately protected and promoted. There are also numerous native and exotic ornamental and useful plants.

Crops & Agriculture

The Casa Dracula is located in a diverse and varied agricultural zone with virtually no machinery. Bananas and plantains, sugar cane, naranjilla, guava (*Psidium*), guaba (*Inga*) and guadua (*Guadua*) are particularly common. Tree stands are usually also used as pastures and therefore are enclosed by living hedges (*cerca viva*). In addition, there is a wealth of other crops.

The Altropico Foundation, headquartered in Quito, San Lorenzo, Tulcán and Chical, promotes sustainable agriculture and promotes the education and training of farmers.

Wild plants

The tropical Andes belong to the most species rich areas of the world. The valley of the Río San Juan (Quinshul, Chical, Maldonado) with its high rainfall from the Pacific throughout the year harbours a particularly rich plant life. The epiphytes are especially rich, and among them are the orchids. In the whole area that can be reached from the Casa Dracula within a day trip, grow about 3000 plant species. This is as much as in Germany.