

Gavilán, the Black Hawk-Eagle

Cloudbridge Nature Reserve - Nature Notes No. 27

In July 2005, a 24-hectare farm became part of Cloudbridge. It's a beautiful steep sector of vistas and forests, and we call it Gavilán, a musical term locals use for the Black Hawk-Eagle, *Spizaetus tyrannus*. This was the bird we saw flying across the former cattle pasture on our first visit.

The Black Hawk-Eagle that soars slowly above the slopes of Gavilán is found in the tropics of the New World, mostly in partially forested areas from central Mexico to eastern Peru, southern Brazil, and parts of Argentina. It ranges from lowlands to about 2000 meters. When flying it appears black, but seen more closely it is speckled white below, with barred wings and tail. The wings appear elliptical, narrower at base. The tail is long and narrow, usually not fanned. The four grey vertical bars of the tail quills are quite noticeable and the wing quills are barred with a pale area at their bases. Perched, one can often make out the black, whitechecked color, feathered tarsi, and slight crest with whitish line above the eye.

Even more distinctive is the bird's call. As it took off from a tree on Gavilán, we heard its cry -- a loud, ringing 'kwee kwee, kwee kwee, cu-weeee' on an even pitch and intensity. The last 'cu-weer' may be given alone and is then a slightly hissing whistle, first ascending, then descending.



Spizaetus tyrannus, the Black Hawk-Eagle



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