

■ Ecuador's most wanted! The elusive Horned Anole *Anolis proboscis* was believed to be extinct in the wild for nearly fifty years, and even today - after its "rediscovery" in 2005 - it remains very hard to locate. Its silhouette is definitely unmistakable - the sharp frontal "horn" immediately distinguishes it from all other Ecuadorian lizards.

Ecuador's rare Horned Anole **THE CLOUD FOREST "PINOCCHIO" LIZARD**

LONG BELIEVED EXTINCT, AN AMAZING
AND UNUSUAL LITTLE SOUTH AMERICAN REPTILE
IS FINALLY REVEALED IN STUNNING PHOTOS



■ *Anolis proboscis* can be exceedingly difficult to find in the field, not only because this species is commonly perched on high branches, but also because of its small size and cryptic livery, which forms an ideal combination with branches and colorful leaves.



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PHOTOS BY TROPICAL HERPING

(LUCAS M. BUSTAMANTE - ENRÍQUEZ & ALEJANDRO ARTEAGA)

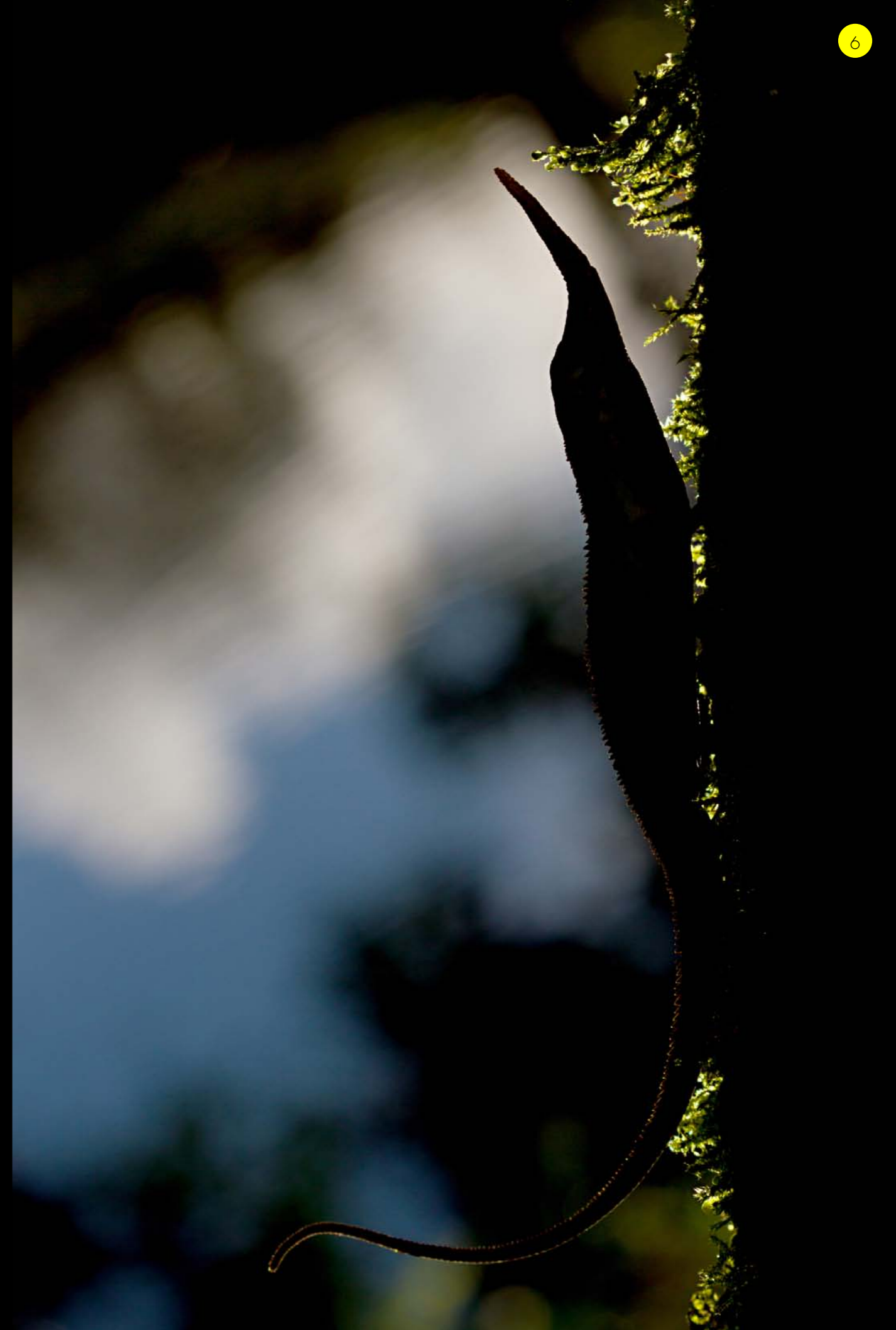
It took me more than two years of constant visits to Mindo, a cloud-forest town in the Western Ecuadorian foothills, to finally encounter the Horned Anole (*Anolis proboscis*)! I always felt it was a mythological reptile, not only among Ecuadorian herps but throughout the world. Can you imagine a lizard with a long appendix

on the tip of its snout, a variety of colors throughout the body, a prehensile tail and even spines on its back? It is difficult not to speak mystically when we refer to Horned Anole. For over 50 years it was listed as "Possibly extinct", until 2005, when a group of Ecuadorian scientists "rediscovered" it. But it was not until two years ago that the global and local anole experts, led by Jonathan Losos, Steven Poe and Fernando Ayala, started several expeditions to investigate everything about its morphology, phylogeny and natural history. The Horned Anole is a

diurnal and slow-moving lizard that usually is found perched between 4-8 meters above the ground. Although most records are in vegetation by roadsides, highways and near open areas, it can be very difficult to find due to its excellent camouflage, which blends perfectly with twigs, mosses, lichens and epiphytes. But what is the use of its proboscis? Sexual selection, defense of territory and fights between males are the first hypotheses that leap to the mind. Science will tell us soon. Whatever the case, we are left to enjoy its beauty and unparalleled mystique. ●



■ *The Horned Anole*
Anolis proboscis'
tail is prehensile,
and it is possibly
used to hold tight to
branches and twigs
when the animal
sleeps. This is
a slow-moving
species, which
spends most of its
time 450–800 cm
above the ground
and which feeds
on a variety
of arboreal
arthropods.



Given its efficient camouflage, most records of the Horned Anole *Anolis proboscis* come from human-disturbed areas, including roadside vegetation, botanical gardens and bamboo trees. In the cloud forest proper this species would be almost impossible to find.





■ *Anolis proboscis* can occasionally be found in bamboo groves and on vegetation growing on steep, near-vertical slopes. However, it usually sleeps on horizontal twigs and leaves, with juveniles seeming to prefer lower perches.

