

Northern Peru Endemics | Trip Report

July 8 – 18, 2019 | Written by Peg Abbott



With guides Andrea Molina, Peg Abbott of Naturalist Journeys, and participants Lana, Bob, Chuck, Barry, Dee, Alan, Holly, Gerold, Lynn, and Walter





Monday, July 8 | Arrival in Lima

All but three of our group arrived early. Two explored on their own; Lana and Bob had fun clocking some miles walking the different neighborhoods of Miraflores and other coastal parts of Lima. Andrea organized a trip for the rest of us to take a boat ride (like a mini-Galapagos!) to Pucusana, and to explore some coastal viewpoints near Lima.

Just out of Lima, our first stop was at a Mirador, with views back to the modern skyline of the city and out to sea. The ocean was churning, and there were hundreds of Peruvian Boobies, Inca Terns, Kelp and Belcher's Gulls, and two species of pelican, Brown and Peruvian. Chuck spotted a couple of Humboldt Penguins in the surf – fun! We got the scope on them for good views.

Heading on, we made it to the fishing village of Pucusana and parked by the restaurant we would return to lunch. We walked through the frenzy of morning at the waterfront to get to the dock. It was so colorful, between boats and all the gear of fishermen, including rubber boots and waders, nets and floats. As we walked, we smelt delicious odors of street food, Andrea watching for a familiar face of the boatman, Guillan, who would take us out for a bird's eye view of seabirds.

We saw a lot of species, but more importantly we got great looks at so many of them. It was challenging to photograph from the moving boat, the swells were gaining hour by hour, but it was great fun. We saw Guanay and Red-legged Cormorant, Peruvian Booby, Blackish Oystercatcher, and several pairs of Humboldt Penguin, at close range. It was such fun watching the penguins navigate on the guano covered rocks, passing gorgeous Inca Terns and curious cormorants as they made their way down to the surf edge, then splash! A group of Southern Sea Lion were hauled out on a flat-rock platform, vocal and barking at each other, and we enjoyed their antics. A couple of big males were in the water. On the way back, our driver chummed with some fish and two big males came right in.

We stopped at a few viewpoints going back to town, a full first day. Barry, Lynn and Walter had flown in that day and we met up for a fun dinner, walking a couple of blocks to enjoy very fresh seafood in a nice atmosphere. Introductions all around, then off to bed to rest up for more adventure.

Tuesday, July 9 | Villa Marshes/Flight to Jaen/Farm Birding at Yanahuanca

We woke to the calls of Rufous-collared Sparrow, a familiar new world sound of Central and South America. Pacific Parrotlets flew past and several of the group watched an Amazilia Hummingbird feed in the garden.

After breakfast, we headed out for the Villa Marshes near Lima, making a quick stop at the same Mirador to try for Inca Tern and Peruvian Booby, Peruvian Pelican for those that missed yesterday's marvel of an outing – how different it was! The sea was very quiet, with no feeding frenzies. We did find a few of each species, as fisherman headed out in their small colorful boats that had been grounded the day before unable to cope with the heavy swell.

We headed on and thankfully arrived early, as within an hour a number of buses arrived with happy school children out for field trips. They were fun to watch but the two species we spied ahead of them were prizes, Wren-like Rushbird and Many-colored Rush Tyrant and not to be missed. Our trail led to a small lake where we found Great Grebe, Slate-colored Coot, Common Gallinule, a Black-crowned Night Heron, and Blue-and-white Swallows. The kids were in uniforms from different schools, they had notebooks for learning about the marsh, and they had great fun climbing the observation tower. Several had phones and wanted photos with us, temporary visiting celebrities and I'm sure to them, with all our bird gear and scopes, we appeared quite odd! We escaped to a quieter part of the reserve, a water channel and the beach, where we birded this backwater area as well as the coast. It was very active, with Neotropic Cormorants decorating a dead tree mid-water, scores of both Gray and Belchers Gulls in various age plumages, a Puna Ibis foraging at close range, with several herons and egrets. From the cattails we had another Many-colored Rush Tyrant – this one a bit easier to photograph – and a Yellow-hooded Blackbird. Those walking the beach picked up Ruddy Turnstone, views of Guanay Cormorant, and Peruvian Booby.





We then headed to the airport where we checked in with relative ease and lunched as we waited for the flight north to Jaen, a city of about 130,000 people. The flight was an hour and forty minutes punctuated by grand views high peaks of the Andes, snow-capped, single peaks, and clusters of peaks. We could look down on glacial lakes and the green skirts of forested slopes. What was interesting was seeing the coastal influence of fog fingering inland, juxtaposed to the sunny slopes and peaks. Approaching Jaen, we traced the wide muddy corridor of the Marañon River, a major tributary of the Amazon that some of us knew from time spent at Iquitos, where this mighty river joins the larger Amazon. Sculptured, arid, and eroded cliffs framed the river.

We arrived at 4:30 P.M. so had just a short time to go birding. We went to a local farm open to birders, Yanahuanca Reserve. The owner, Esquirol, greeted us and led us through peacocks, roosters, a mother cow with a month-old calf, an outdoor shower his son was using, and a very persistent llama that wanted to walk with us. Vermilion Flycatchers were common, we had a half dozen or so in sight at one time, Tropical Kingbird, a family of Tropical Gnatcatcher, and down by another gate, a family of Rufous-fronted Thornbird. We heard a Striped Cuckoo, saw a Streaked Saltator briefly, and then all had very good looks of Golden Grosbeak over our van as we returned, a bold and beautiful species.

It was time to head in to the hotel; Walter announced that it was o-beer-thirty. It had been a long day, so it was good to land at a modern hotel, get settled and enjoy dinner. Knowing we'd be tired, Andrea had pre-ordered avocados with chicken salad stuffing, and then a meat dish with rice and French fries. The Peruvian potatoes are out of this world, so few refrained from enjoying them. Two kinds of ice-cream for dessert, Coconut and Neopolitan, completing the day's bird list and off to bed!

Wednesday, July 10 | Yanahuanca Reserve Walk/Drive to Leymebamba/Festivities!

We woke early to return to the farm, wanting to walk up on the plateau above the farm where expansive views, and chaparral-like woody vegetation, gave promise for a good morning of birding. Several specialties of the region occur here, and our first bird once out of the parking lot (and past the llama) was an endemic, the Little Inca Finch. It posed very well and though at some distance; we could clearly see its yellow bill. It looked a lot like a junco and was quite vocal – nice! The other specialty, Marañon Crescentchest, was much more the skulker, but this time everyone got memorable looks. The rich color and patterns of this species really jump out when you get a good look, a stunning species. We found Tawny-crowned Pygmy Tyrant, Mistletoe Tyrannulet, Bran-colored Flycatcher, and to our surprise, a Scarlet-backed Woodpecker was heard and then spotted in a dense shrub, then flew to an open-crown small tree where we got splendid views. Dull-colored Grassquits were vocal and flying on both sides of the trail.

Horacio, our driver, walked with us and turned out to be a great spotter. We had at least 8 Spot-throated Hummingbirds, we observed them flycatching as well as feeding in a tubular orange flower. Walter spied a nest of one along the trail, we passed quickly not to disturb it, as it had two white eggs in the perfect lichen and spiderweb cup. Speckled Hummingbird put in a quick appearance, and a few of the group got good looks at Necklaced Spinetail which teased us with loud calls above and below our pathway. Two Pacific Hornero did a





duet and groomed each other as a family of Tropical Gnatcatcher scolded around them. Time passed quickly and breakfast was calling, so about 8:30 P.M we departed.

At the hotel a few of our group had enjoyed a more leisurely morning, enjoying coffee and breakfast out by the pool, finding Red-crested Finch, Blue-gray and Silver-beaked Tanagers, Bananaquits, and other garden species. We helped ourselves to the buffet, enjoying fresh melon, eggs, bread and for some, well-seasoned pork belly.

Our drive took us down a tributary of the Marañon River, the Chamayo, and the steep slopes on either side held cacti, two types, one a vertical columnar and the other a densely branching cluster. A succulent of some variety with silver leaves filled in gaps between. There was a lot of traffic

so we could not pull over to inspect the vegetation as we wished, but we admired the tapestries and noted how they changed as we traveled. Soon we crossed the Marañon River, running muddy and wide, and here we entered Peru's Amazonas Province. Huge groves of papaya were cultivated next to the river for miles and miles.

After a good early morning birding, today was largely a travel day, crossing through some incredible geography, following the course of the Utcabamba ("cotton valley") River much of the way. We took a few birding breaks and got good looks at Fasciated Wren and Yellow-tailed Oriole at the first, Black-chested Buzzard Eagle, Andean Emerald and Buff-bellied Tanager at the second. We had lunch at a local café in Pedro Ruiz, with a choice of a rich soup with chicken and hominy or salad, then an entrée of beef, chicken or fish. Dessert was orange jello; we watched two local policemen grab their jello to go as they answered a call so we figured it must be a local favorite! Bromeliads began to decorate every standing tree, power line and human construction. We spotted a number of Fasciated Tiger Herons in the river, and Chuck spied an Amazon Kingfisher.

We arrived at Leimabamba at day's end in time to see locals gathering on the square, lovely light casting a glow on the paired stone towers of the church. Tonight, was the start of the celebration of Saint Carmen and a tower was erected in the square to show off circular whirling fireworks. Festivities!

Our hotel was a few blocks off the square of this little village, run by a brother and sister who did so much to make our stay comfortable. They cooked local foods for us to enjoy at their long, wooden dining table. Orchids

and other plants were placed in the open-air courtyard in abundance, giving the feel of dining in a greenhouse. Dinner started with squash, potato and celery soup, into which many of us put some chile sauce for just the right touch. We had a braised beef with sauce, more really good potatoes, and ice cream with frozen peaches. We finished in time to go down to the square to see the fireworks show and listen to the band. There were people of all ages, many dancing to the music. The band was mainly a variety of horns and drums, 9 people in total. It was a clear, fine night and fun to be part of their celebrations. Luckily it seemed to end by the time we were back and ready for bed.

Thursday, July 11 | Camino de Lagunas del Condores/Leymebamba Museum/Kenti Cafe/Coffee Shop Feeders

We woke this morning and had breakfast at 6 A.M. We headed out to bird at a higher elevation, accessed on the road to “Lake of the Condors”, a sacred lake known as a famous archeological site where multiple burials of mummies, over 200 had been found. The road was gravel (the paved option continues to Cajamarca) and a steady climb.

Near some cliffs, we pulled over to scan for possible Condors. We tried this twice, returning as we bumped into another group that had had success earlier, and on the second time we got really good looks at an adult flying, repeatedly making circles above a ridge, nice! Horacio spotted it and gave a loud hoot. We also had a Slaty-backed Chat Tyrant, very cute, new for many, and a favorite of Lana’s for the trip.

We then drove up to where the valley divides into two drainages, parking by an old stone bridge. You could tell water raced through here, both by large boulders in the stream and the size of the culverts. It was still early, sun not yet on the area we walked, and could best be described as brisk. Those that brought hats and gloves and scarves were walking in comfort, those without kept eyeing the sun areas to help them warm!

The first bird was a male Torrent Duck. We got great looks as it perched on a rock, racing water all around it. We got it in the scope, everyone got a good look, but then soon it was off downstream. Our photographers followed it, while others stayed to scan. Upstream Lynn called, “I’ve got dippers!” Two White-capped Dipper fed on a point, working their way towards us as they bobbed up and down in sunlit water. They took flight and went under the bridge and downstream, but about ten minutes later we heard hungry calls from a third, a youngster, adult sized but still inexperienced. It stayed just barely a foot into the water, tracing the same path the adults did, calling repeatedly. We hoped they would come back but as they did not, we gave up and walked along the road, getting views of 10 or so Yellow-billed Teal and three Andean Lapwing.



By mid-morning, we were shedding coats and putting on sunscreen to walk downstream. We were lucky to run into two mixed flocks, each a rush of birds not all identified they moved so quickly. Both flocks had Yellow-breasted Brushfinch, Superciliated Hemispingus and Citrine Warbler. The second added Rusty Spinetail and Streaked Tuftedcheek. We got the scope on a Purple-throated Sunangel, a treat. On some cliffs we had good looks at Cream-winged Cinclodes.

The morning went quickly. As the thought of lunch beckoned us, we headed back to our cozy hotel garden where Julio and Nellie were there to greet us. They had prepared a delicious homemade potato soup, and then pasta served with two choices of sauce, Bolognese or spinach pesto. We then got a short break, and hour or so to rest, well-deserved.

At 3 P.M we gathered to go up to the Leymabamba Museum and a nearby coffee house known for its hummingbird feeders. They are right across the street, about 15 minutes out of town, so it made for a leisurely afternoon. The museum visit started with a video, the first half was excellent and set the tone for what we would see on our visit to the Kuelap National Archeological Monument the following day. The second half, we got more detail about the process of mummification than we desired, leading to some good jokes later on in the day. The hummingbird feeders were hopping, very active with Chestnut-breasted Coronet and Sparkling Violetear as the main species, with individuals of other species joining into the frenzy. We saw Lesser Violetear, both Little and Purple-throated Woodstar, and the beautiful Rainbow Starfrontlet.

In the gardens of the museum we also picked up Rusty Flowerpiercer and Green-tailed Trainbearer. The museum exhibits were impressive, many examples of textiles, pottery, tools, jewelry, and artifacts of daily life. Some of the textiles were in excellent condition and the size of a small tablecloth. A climate-controlled room held the mummies from the Lake of the Condor burial site excavation, a globally-important and very impressive collection.

Back at our hotel we gathered for dinner and afterwards the bird checklist. Dinner was a quinoa egg-drop soup and a curried chicken and mushroom dish, both classic Peruvian dishes, finished off by a dessert made of purple corn syrup thickened to make a pudding.

Friday, July 12 | Kuelap National Archeological Monument/Road to Gocta Falls/Huembo Lodge

We left early this morning, as it would be a full day to fit in time at the famous archeological ruins at Kuelap, continue north passing back through Pedro Ruiz, and then on to Huembo Lodge. But what an amazing site to visit!

We logged in about four miles on our walk around the top of a high (about 10,000 ft.) elevation, taking in the various structures, intricate stonework, and views out to surrounding mountains. We took it slow and had wonderful views almost right at the start at a handsome Mountain Caracara. At a trail junction Blackish Tapaculo sang and sang, but it remained in its dense-shrubby lair.

A local guide explained the narrow entry into the plaza is used for protecting the extensive community. We learned that all goods, and seasonally water, had to be transported from the river, some 3000 feet up onto this mesa, and we saw the centuries old scrape marks of the hooves of llamas! One of the memorable things about this site was the intricate rock work done to make the site beautiful, jaguar and snake eyes, patterns in the rock



walls amplifying their beauty. The views were also stupendous, but life could not have been easy here without a lot of labor to support it.

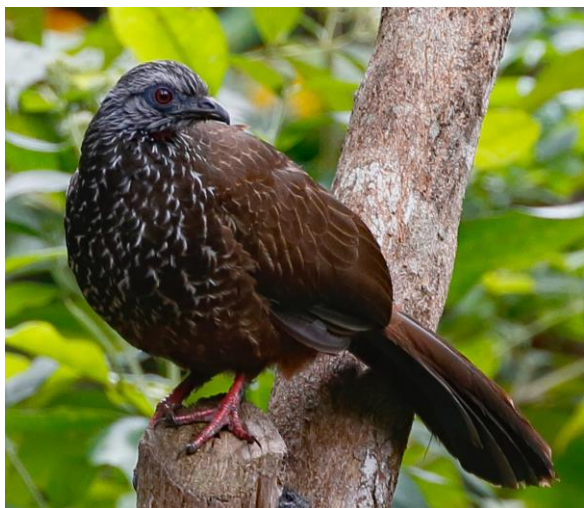
We accessed the ruins by a tram, crossing a very deep gorge (Peg hates heights, thanks for the support gang!) but this certainly saves the integrity of the mesa top. Poor Lana did not feel well and waited for us at the visitor contact entry site, where vendors and a small restaurant are located. We lingered longer than we thought, and finally caught up with her in time to have our lunch with some coffees and pastry, then headed on for Huembo Lodge.

With our driving time, it was clear we would not arrive by dark, so we opted to do a birding stop on the road to Gocta Falls. We found Inca Jays (Green Jay) and loved their beauty and color. A mixed flock of tanagers came in and we had a good second chance at Maranon Crescentchest, nice!

Huembo was waiting for us, so helpful to get our bags down from the main road. This was once a farm with totally cleared fields and coffee groves. It has returned to its natural integrity. We enjoyed the information posted in the dining room (plant ID, yeah!) and photos of the transition to farm. We would enjoy their efforts tomorrow, over 8000 trees planted to make it all happen! Being a part of this conservation effort in our visit made the trip more meaningful for all of us. And we enjoyed the nice hot soup and meal, with fresh fruit for dessert.

Saturday, July 13 | Huembo Lodge and Magic of Marvelous Spatuletail/Owlet Lodge

What a morning! We woke to bird sounds and gathered in the open area by the lodge – so many species! We were torn to linger in the garden taking in good sightings of Rufous-capped Antshrike, various tanagers and eleanias, or getting down to the feeders where we hoped to see Marvelous Spatuletail hummingbird. He did not disappoint us! For the next few hours we were mesmerized by this charismatic species, as well as other colorful hummers and in the distance, at a platform feeder with corn, two species of guans, Andean and Sickle-winged, wow! We also walked trails of the reserve, finding a pair of secretive White-crowned Tapaculo, Sierran Eleania and more. We were enchanted with Huembo, its conservation story, lovely staff and location. Hard to tear ourselves away!





We left in time that those that wanted to tackle a strenuous hike at Owlet Lodge, to the spot for a hopeful Long-whiskered Owl sighting, could leave by 5 P.M. We were pleased to find out we could do the “short” loop, an adventure of steep slopes, mud and rocks for only an hour down the mountain, then return, rather than the long loop. The long loop has multiple spots to try, so we were taking a bit of a gamble, but luck was with us. We listened to Sharp’s Wren and Rufous-browed Peppershrike and others en route down, catching a glimpse of a Yellow-billed Cacique flying away from the trail. It got dark as we neared a small shelter and took a break.

We used playback to call the owl, hearing nothing as a reply for some minutes. Our guide went farther down the trail, repeated this technique, then returned to us just as it answered. Like clockwork it came to us, though its voice seemed to indicate it was high above us, and there it was, in a small tree behind one we had hoped it would land in. We all got great views, and it stayed just as long as it wanted (not long) and we all got marvelous views.

This is a rare, and only recently re-discovered species thought to be extinct. Our guide was part of the survey team that first recorded it. What a thrill to witness this truly adorable small member of the owl menagerie.

Welcome Pisco sours courtesy of the lodge was a big hit tonight. At this elevation it was cold, a warm meal was most welcome.

Sunday, July 14 | Owlet Lodge/Fundo Alto Nieva

We started in the parking lot before getting on the bus, finding an endemic the Johnson’s Tody-tyrant. Next stop for the group was Fundo Alto Nieva, about ten minutes down the road, where the group walked about 15 minutes to the hummingbird feeder areas where Booted Racket-tail, Greenish Puffleg and Long-tailed Sylph were the star attractions. We then walked about 40 minutes to a place where the owners feed Ochre-fronted Antpitta and this charming little being was waiting for us, the local guide Kenyi knew him well. It was if the bird was waiting, saying “about time gang...” After wonderful views we walked back, the trail was muddy and difficult due to rain occurring locally for the full morning.



Weather really affected our birding this day, but it happens – this has been a very wet year in this region so we did all we could and looked forward to clearing ahead. Owlet Lodge put the heaters on in the dining room and we clustered under them like chicks in an incubator as they made us pisco sours!

The lodge is also a research station, and we felt very welcome and privileged to be here. A few of our group, including Peg were under the weather so to speak, but soon would recover.

Monday, July 15 | Owlet Lodge/Aguas Verdes/Santa Elena Reserve/Masked Duck Pond/Waqanki Lodge

We woke very early as we wanted to be on site at Aguas Verdes when the owner, Norvil, would put out feed for hoped for tinamous and wood quail. It was dark as we entered the lodge, but probably due to luggage haulers (Chuck watched on staff member hauling six at one time!) we did not have activity today from the Swallow-tailed Nightjar who was so cooperative the previous morning. We left on time, and he was there to welcome us.

Norvil has transformed his coffee farm to welcome birds. It has taken him many years, but the results are most impressive! He has rocked in much of the entry path to make the walk in easier. In under ten minutes we were inside a comfortable two-story blind, each with our own viewing hole, a few camera view holes interspersed. A pair of Orange-billed Sparrow were at the site already feeding, their bill color electric in the dawn light. Then suddenly a mix of corn, yucca, and rice came out of an elevated automatic feeder so no human would scare



away the secretive species, and it worked! Within minutes a Lesser Tinamou waddled in, timidly picking at the corn, then getting bolder to settle in for a feed. This one left, then another came, this time with a tiny chick, probably just a few weeks old, ridiculously cute.

About half the group headed on to the next station, one for hummingbirds, then more left, and then – in came the Rufous-breasted Wood-Quail, three of them, a male and two females. They stayed for some time, enough for several to return. A most secretive species and a real prize to see so well!

The hummingbird platform was beyond excellent and it literally exploded with life. We all fit comfortably on a raised platform. On one side there was a thick hedge of Vervain, on the other a mix of hummingbird-friendly plants, a water feature and natural vegetation. Wire-crested Thorntail were spotted immediately and were present our entire viewing time! We had cracking views of each species, soon learning their various color combinations and shapes. In all we saw fifteen species.

They made coffee for us to take a break, but Paradise Tanager and a Buff-throated Saltator got us right back up on our feet. This wonderful spot is building cabins for future guests and we wish them the best of success!

Our next stop was a bridge in the general Santa Elena reserve area. Despite a lot of traffic, we had great luck here. Right out of the van we had a perched Black Caracara in the scope. Soon we were distracted by a pair of Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers, one of the most colorful of that clan, checking out a nest cavity fairly close to the bridge. We got good looks at Amazon Kingfisher and a peek at a Green Kingfisher, superb looks at Greater Yellow-headed Vulture on the wing, and an inquisitive pair of Black-capped Donacobious in nearby shrubs.

From here we continued on our way, going just a short way to an information center for Santa Elena Reserve, a spot for local camping, picnics and boat trips. They had a nice shelter for us to eat our boxed lunch, a cooked rice dish with chicken, sausage, and vegetables. The box of treats was a hit, chocolates, cookies, and crackers which we also shared with the manager. Being close to the water under nice shade vegetation, we found some good birds – good looks at Black-faced Nunbird, Green-backed Trogon, Green Kingfisher, and Pale-legged Hornero.

Andrea had one more stop up her sleeve, a roadside pond on a quiet rural road known to have Masked Ducks. They were there and stayed in the open long enough for all to have scope views. Purple Gallinule popped up at the end of the pond, one adult and one immature. A pair of Common Moorhen had really small, all black chicks – cute! Peg heard and located a Yellow-bellied Eleania, we got in the scope as well.

We arrived at Waqanki Lodge and got settled with time to do a short walk. The hotel grounds were lush with fruiting and flowering trees so from the open areas we had good views at so many tanagers, flycatchers, euphonias and more.

Dinner was served in a covered area with open air and a view, served by the family that owns the Lodge. Tonight, they had an avocado salad, beef with vegetables, and ice-cream for dessert. We took time to catch up our growing bird list and then gave a good try for two species of owl, one we had heard from the dinner table – Ferruginous Pygmy Owl. While it was a lovely, full moon evening with light glowing on the surrounding mountains, we dipped on seeing either species. They were not interested in us on this beautiful night!

Tuesday, July 16 | Waqanki Lodge/Hummingbirds Galore

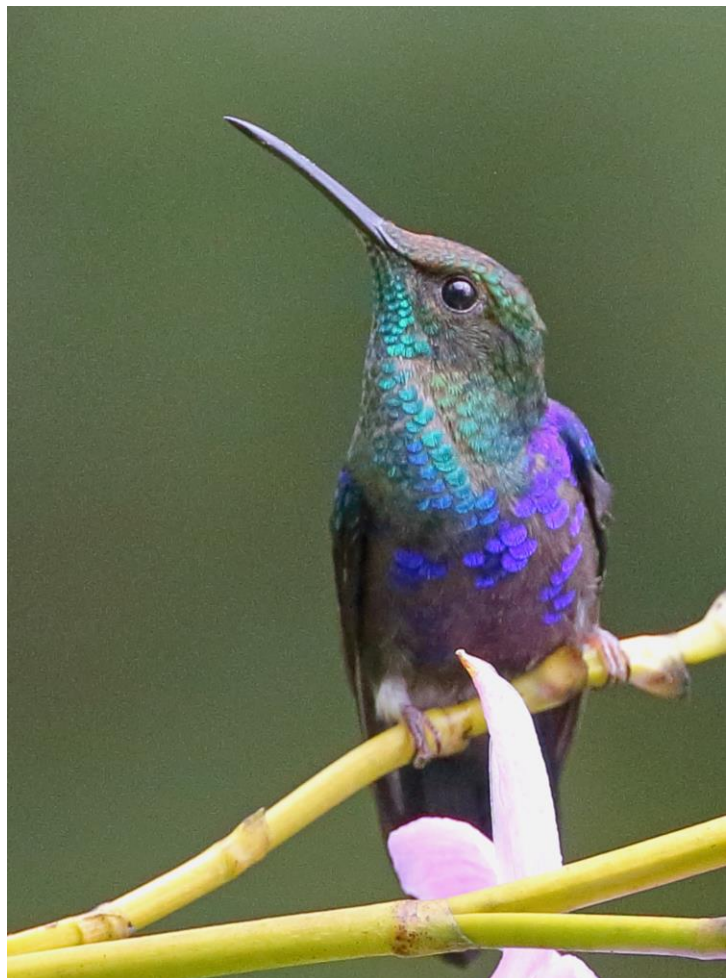
We had breakfast at 6 A.M in the dining room, watching birds come to their breakfast of bananas and papaya as we had ours. Black-billed Thrush, Purple-throated Euphonia, Blue-gray, and Palm came in regularly, and the striking Black-bellied male and female made a few quick appearances. A Streaked Flycatcher (one of the first

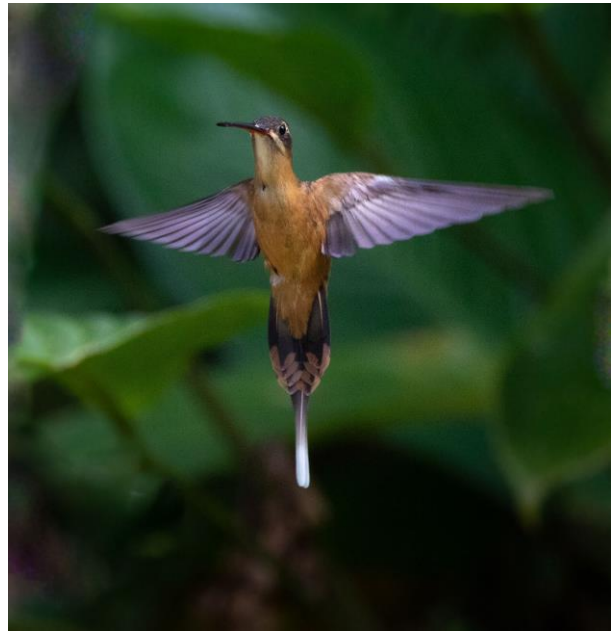


dawn songs) gave us good scope views. This lodge had delicious coffee, and also some local made crafts and coffee, issuing a feeding frenzy for bags and T-shirts painted with local birds.

Time to bird! It was a lovely morning, and we did not get far quickly as there were many species around. We had super looks at a pair of Gilded Barbet and were pleased to find Peruvian Tyrannulet right by our cabins. People caught up on Turquoise Tanager views as some had missed that one. Lana has spotted a White-chinned Sapphire by the cabin flower hedge, recognized by its bright orange bill. This inspired us to move on to find more hummingbirds.

We walked from the cabins to a hummingbird area that was buzzing. But first we had to get through a beautiful orchid garden, not in full bloom but with plenty to look at. The collection was so impressive – many would return in the afternoon to look in more detail. Atop the hill, feeders to one side were secretive with shade and to the other open with sun, so a mix of species was encouraged. Our photographers had way too much fun as Rufous-crested Coquette males were feeding and even better, perching with their crests in display on the hedgerow of Vervain. They were joined by Blue-tailed Emerald, and Amethyst Woodstar. The bullies at this group of feeders (each location had at least one) were White-necked Jacobin. They guarded feeders and chased others away flaring out their startling white tails. But there were so many attempts to get at the nectar they could not discourage all. In the shadows they vied with Fork-tailed Woodnymph and Brown Violetear, at the two most secretive end feeders a Black-throated Hermit would make a mad dash in from time to time. Flowering gingers and hanging feeders in the sun attracted Great-billed (formerly Long-tailed) Hermit, and we got splendid





views. We hung out for a couple of hours, also watching a Little Woodpecker, Short-crested Flycatcher, Paradise Tanager, and other species in view in the tree canopy.

Back for lunch, a local fish served with plantain cups filled with a fresh salsa and a nice salad with cooked carrots and beets. We had a fresh juice of camucamu fruit, tart and refreshing. This is a family run small hotel, the women in the kitchen were sisters and they took great care of us.

After lunch there was a choice, to spend the afternoon at leisure, or to go with Peg and Andrea to check out a newly opened birding area, Morro de Calzada. The group split evenly, and all were happy with their choices. Those at “home” got to wander the groups, spend time on photography, catch a nap, and enjoy some wine ahead of dinner on the nice platform in view of the feeders – tough life! The drive back to the new park was only about 45 minutes, and we were met by enthusiastic park staff who greeted us with handshakes and warm smiles. We were thrilled to spot Saddle-backed Tamarins as we got out of the bus, quite low when we first saw them so we could really see their intriguing little faces. One had a baby; they scampered quickly up into the forest canopy demonstrating their leaping ability. Attracted by the motion, a Chestnut-eared Aracari flew in, then stayed around as it processed a big fruit in plain view – fun! Right away we got onto a Blue-crowned Trogon which in time gave us good views, this one spotted by Horacio, our driver. Lana imitated how it twitched its tail while calling at the same time looking through the scope, causing good laughter from all. As she says, birding has to include some fun! The woods were largely quiet, likely ahead of a big storm moving in that absolutely drenched us. We had gotten out of the bus so quickly to see the tamarins; we did not all have gear. By the end of the afternoon as the sun came out, a few of our group were holding arms aloft as if vultures drying their wings.

The rain stopped as we reached the parking area, the park guards amused by our tenacity. As we started to pick through the tanager flock coming through, we found them taking photos of our group and one other there, obviously delighted to have visitors. We had walked down to the new observation tower, where they were putting varnish on the stairs. They processed our tickets with pride – what a great new addition to birding and hiking this would be. The “morro” was most impressive, with three miradors up on its crest. We would not get there this day, but were happy to find Rufous-fronted Thornbirds around the parking lot, Paradise Tanagers, and just after Peg expressed regret about not seeing the piculets, (two species possible on our route, one an endemic) Lynn spied a Lafresnaye’s Piculet in the tree tops. It was as if we had wished it in. This was the more widespread variety, but still gave us good looks and was new for several in the group.

Back to dinner, vegetable soup, chicken in pepper sauce and greens, and mazamorra (jelly like fruit) for dessert. Peg’s tummy was off, so she skipped the meal but heard the Band-bellied Owl call loudly from the tall riverine trees behind her room, so came over to roust the group. The servers looked puzzled as the table emptied quickly! The owl would call again about 11 P.M but on our two nights was not responsive to call. Back to finish the wine!

Wednesday, July 17 | Waqanki Lodge/Oilbird Gorge/Aconabikh, the Koepcke Hermit’s Reserve

We woke to mist and light rain, but action at the feeders by the breakfast area was good, bringing in a new species of Euphonia, the White-vented. Gorgeous Black-bellied Tanagers, one of the endemics of this region, made repeated appearances. Birds must be used to the weather as activity was still good as we gathered by the cabins for some birding while Horacio packed up the bus. A tanager flock came through giving us another chance to see Yellow-bellied, Turquoise, Black-bellied, Blue-gray and Palm Tanagers, and a bright Black-faced Dacnis

pair. An Ochre-bellied Flycatcher and the same Peruvian Tyrannulet (another endemic) joined the feeding frenzy. So many of the lodge trees were in fruit that birds did not have to move far to forage. A pair of Gilded Barbet came in – Barry described having time for close up views of three of this beautiful species at the feeders yesterday afternoon, a lucky find.

We crossed the bridge back through the orchid garden to hang out by the hopeful Bluish-fronted Jacamar spot which did not produce the jacamar, but it was as active as it was yesterday with good birding. Everyone got onto the Boat-billed Flycatcher calling repeatedly, we watched Russet-backed Oropendolas feed in a bright orange Erythrina tree, and a few other species, heading back to the bus for our drive to Tarapota.

Our first stop was at a deep gorge with rushing water and steep narrow cliffs. We were above it, so our view of the Oilbirds was looking down on them. A few flew about, and two pair were perched where we could see them. They blended in beautifully and it seemed a secure place for this important rainforest fruit disperser to roost. They are active by night and fly great distances to forage then return to select roosts. Nice to get a look at this most unusual bird!

Road time was next, we passed villages and farms and dropped in elevation as we traveled. It was raining all the way, gray and overcast and not very promising. We made one quick pit stop, heading to Aconabikh, the Koepcke's Hermit Reserve, where we would have a picnic lunch and time to watch hummingbirds and hike a trail to look for more species. We got to the edge of Tarapota, then veered up a winding and scenic mountain road, obviously developed for tourism. There were various rainforest adventure stops, coffee houses, and then a sign for this important reserve.

In we went, hungry for lunch, but entertained



by a pair of Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet's building a nest. We dutifully did so, and were amazed to find yet another special place, alive with activity. Who wouldn't be happy watching five Gould's Jewelfront alongside Golden-tailed Sapphires, Black-throated Mango, a Blue-fronted Lancebill male, and two Koepcke's Hermits in all their graceful glory? Several of us were tired and decided to just camp out here, while others continued up the trail to find Golden-headed Manakin. The local guide was able to find them Dendrobates imitator, a lovely green and black frog that mimics Poison Dart Frogs. Not to be left behind, we heard that the photographer upstairs in the blind was indeed a herpetologist enthusiast, and he graciously came down to show them to Lynn, Walter, Holly and Gerold, knowing right where to look. It turned out he and Walter knew a frog expert in common and had quite a good time chatting. We learned a lot from the discussion about how ecotourism is now coming into the area as safety is more secure and villagers are very happy to share their properties, encourage more preserved areas as they see it bringing in a secure and better way of life.

What a way to wrap up our explorations! Going back to the city and all its traffic and noise was a bit of a shock. We checked in just at dusk, and we got cleaned up then met by the pool area for dinner in the open air. This was a party for us, a celebration for the retirement of Lynn Feryus, a veteran of no less than 30 Naturalist Journeys tours, a dear friend of owner Peg Abbotts, and someone with a grand new chapter of life ahead. We had pisco sours (we would miss these!), a nice meal and wine. We then recounted our top 5 favorite species, Dee and Peg running the tally. What a first – there were 29 species chosen in all, with really very little overlap in choices. Many of the gems we'd seen just at one location, diversity here so high, with many species living in tight ranges, such as the Marvelous Spatuletail. It was really fun comparing notes, and while we'd had a few bumps, a few long driving days we'll clear up before the next trip, our inaugural trip was deemed a good success.

Thursday, July 18 | Lake Ricuricocha/Flight to Lima/Departures

We made one more outing this final day and it turned out to be super productive. Right off the bat we found a perched Snail Kite, then pulled into a good overview of the lake. Before our eyes were HUNDREDS of Comb Ducks, probably 300 or more, flying, swimming, we got great views! Among them were Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, and scanning the far shore with her scope, Peg called out in surprise, "Hoatzins!" A dozen or so, quite distant, but still a treat. We found Pale-vented Pigeon, Cocoi Heron, Anhinga, Pale-breasted Ground Dove, Southern Lapwing, and more. Several pair of Common Tody-Flycatcher were busy tending their hanging nests and into a tall tree came a Spot-breasted Woodpecker. We got a Barred Antshrike pair to come out, having only



heard them on this trip, and a Ringed Kingfisher posed for us. Several flycatchers were in the area, and we furiously took photos of a confusing one, which we later sleuthed out to settle on Southern Scrub Flycatcher. Chivi Vireo appeared – we could have stayed much longer birding here, but we had to go.

A quick domestic flight took us back to Lima, and none of us flew out until almost midnight, Peg surprised the group with rooms at the adjacent Costa del Sol Hotel – Yippee! Lana suggested lunch and we enjoyed another meal together. We ate so much that lighter fare in the bar was all we were up to later. Lynn and Walter really enjoyed their room as their flight got delayed until dawn.

Our flock thus dispersed from a grand adventure!

Photo Credits:

Many-colored Rush Tyrant, Peg Abbott (PA); White-bellied Woodstar, GM; Blue-fronted Lancebill, GM; Ocher-fronted Antpitta, GM; View of Andes from Kuelap, ALGE; Silvery Tanager, GM; Black-throated Mango, GM; Peruvian Booby, Alan Gertler (ALGE); Inca Tern, ALGE; Belcher's Gull, ALGE; Humboldt Penguins, ALGE; Neotropical Cormorants, Gerold Morrison (GM); Peruvian Pelicans, GM; Puna Ibis, GM; Belchers Gull, ALGE; Tropical Gnatcatcher, ALGE; Yanahuanca birding, PA; Group birding, Dee pointing, PA; Group Birding, Villa Marshes, PA; Group birding Yanahuanca, PA; Horacio and Andrea Santa Elena, PA; Villa Marshes Kids, PA; Red-crested Finch, GM; Blue-gray Tanager, GM; Yellow-tailed Oriole, GM; Yellow-billed Teal, GM; Yellow-breasted Brushfinch, GM; Cable car (Dee, Lana, Andrea), ALGE; Lesser Violetear, GM; Chestnut-breasted Coronet, GM; Cable car (Bob, Alan, Holly), ALGE; Sparkling Violetear, ALGE; Green-tailed Trainbearer, GM; Marvelous Spatuletail, GM; Andean Guan, GM; Sickle-winged Guan, GM; Greenish Puffleg, GM; Long-tailed Sylph, GM; Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers, GM; Black-capped Donacobius, ALGE; Wire-crested Thorntail, ALGE; Streaked Flycatcher, GM; Black-billed Thrush, GM; Purple-throated Euphonia, GM; Gilded Barbet, GM; White-necked Jacobin, GM; Blue-tailed Emerald, GM; Fox-tailed Woodnymph, GM; Group birding cave overview, PA; Koepcke's Hermit, PA; Santa Elena group birding, PA; Taropota Day, PA; Aconabikh sign, Holly & Gerold, PA; Group shot at viewpoint to Aconabikh, PA; Black-bellied Tanager, GM; Golden-tailed Sapphire, GM; Gould's Jewelfront, GM; Common Tody-Flycatcher, GM; Spot-breasted Woodpecker, GM; Comb Ducks, GM.