

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



Guides: Andrea Molina and Woody Wheeler

with Bill, David, Denise, John, Jerry, Judy, Karen, Linda, Lori, Mark, Pat and Robin



Photo taken by Luke, a volunteer at Manu Learning Center

Day 1: Lima to Pantanos de Villa, Pucusana, San Pedro Beach

On a cool, misty morning we headed south from Lima along its extensive public beaches to the protected wetlands of Pantanos De Villa. As soon as we stepped off the bus onto the spongy, soft straw trails of the refuge, we were surrounded by birds. West Peruvian Doves with their enchanting blue eyes perched on the tops of shrubs. A Harris' Hawk ousted a Black Vulture from one of the tall

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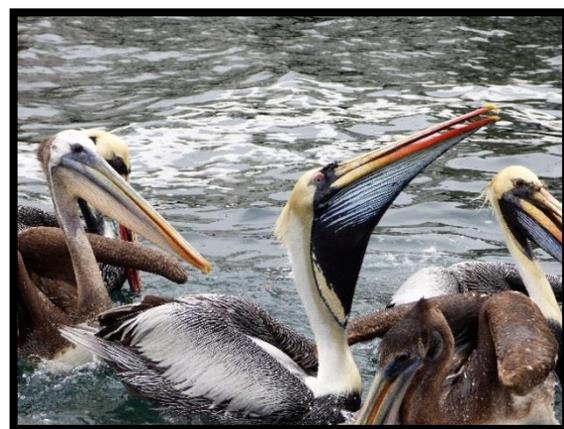
perches, and a Long-tailed Mockingbird chose a utility wire for its perch. Competition for perching spots was fierce!

Then came the next wave of birds as we ambled along the soft straw trails of the refuge: Yellow-bellied Seed eater, Lesser Goldfinch, Snowy and Great Egrets, as well as the appropriately named Many-colored Rush Tyrant. Andrea helped attract a Wren-like Rushbird by imitating its "clickety" call.



In one of the refuge's large ponds, we had good looks at majestic Great Grebe, Slate-colored Coot, and White-cheeked Pintail. Continuing on the loop trail through salt-marsh wetlands we encountered Grassland Yellow Finch, Drab Seed eater, Plumbeous Rail and several Least Bittern. We watched our first Croaking Doves perch for a few minutes until they were flushed by an attacking Peregrine Falcon. Miraculously, the much slower doves escaped.

After completing the very birdy and scenic loop trail, we drove a short distance to another salt marsh separated from the Pacific Ocean by a narrow isthmus of sandy beach. Here we found Wilson's Phalarope, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Blue-winged Teal and Whimbrel along with many other species.



Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

At this point it was time to head to the fishing town of Pucusana for our boat tour along a rugged stretch of the Pacific where nesting cormorants, seabirds and sea mammals can be found. The fishermen were gathered as we set out in our motorized fishing boats which doubled as tour boats. Soon after launching into the lively, colorful harbor of Pucusana, we saw Inca Terns, Seaside Cinclodes, American and Blackish Oystercatchers. As we left the harbor and headed along a stretch of open sea along steep rocky bluffs, numerous birds roosted there including Peruvian Pelicans, Peruvian and Blue-footed Boobies, Red-legged and a few Guanay Cormorants. As we pulled into a bay, we spotted our first of three Humboldt Penguins, interspersed among the Boobies on the heavily chalked rocky cliffs. A large group of South American Sea Lions and a rare Marine Sea Otter joined the sea bird gathering.



Following this seabird extravaganza, we enjoyed a fresh seafood lunch at a Pucusana restaurant. Then we returned to Lima via a stop at San Pedro Beach. Here we did especially well with shorebirds, finding Stilt Sandpiper, Sanderling, Semi-palmated and Snowy Plover and Lesser Yellowlegs. Peruvian Meadowlarks and Vermilion Flycatchers with their brilliant red plumage stood out in contrast against the green and brown marsh grasses.

At dusk we returned to our comfortable Lima hotel to celebrate a successful first day with drinks and dinner. It was the last day of salt water environs for our group which was about to spend the rest of the trip in the Andes and a wide variety of inland habitats.

Day 2: Lima to Cusco; Lago de Huacarpay; Paucona Archaeological Site, Paucartambu and Wayqecha Biological Station

Today was primarily a travel day from Lima to Cusco and eventually to Wayqecha in the high cloud forests of the Andes. We departed very early in the morning for our flight to Cusco where we had breakfast at a nice place with fresh baked goods. The sun came out showcasing Cusco's dramatic mountainous surroundings.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

After breakfast, we travelled by van to Laguna Huacarpay. The action began the minute we were out of the van. A Black-chested Buzzard Hawk was being chased across the sky by an Andean Lapwing. Yellow-winged Blackbirds popped out of the grasses, briefly perching on them in small groups prior to diving back into them. The bright sunlight on the lago (lake) illuminated the turquoise bills of Puna Teal. As they dabbled, they were followed closely by a half-dozen Wilson's Phalaropes, apparently feeding on the scraps of vegetation stirred up by the teal – a good example of commensalism.

Our first Andean Gulls flew over and landed on the far shore of the lake. A Variable Hawk flew then perched on a nearby rocky hillside. Plumbeous Rail wandered through the grasses and out into the open mud flats.



We then drove a short distance to some pre-Incan ruins. In this protected area, we encountered Puna Ibis, Yellow-billed Teal, Cinerous Conebill, Golden-billed Saltator, Peruvian Sierra Finch and a close look at a Great Horned Owl.

Following this productive morning of birding and archaeological site-seeing, we stopped for a picnic lunch in a pasture in the tiny hamlet of Paucona. Here we were visited by local kids, dogs and sheep as we admired the scenery, the sense of history and the birds nearby including a Mountain Caracara.



Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

On the long gravel road leading to Manu over a 12,000-foot mountain pass, we descended to the picturesque town of Paucartambo, where a major festival was underway: Virgen del Rosario.



This turned out to be a spectacular event complete with elaborate costumes, dancing, marching bands, multiple parade processions and hundreds of spectators. We also visited an excellent museum that showcased the festivals and their elaborate costumes.



After a few hours of this cultural infusion and live mesmerizing entertainment featuring everything from demons to religious figures and tribal dancers, we continued the drive on the long windy road through the mountains to Wayqecha. We arrived after dark and went in to the lodge to have dinner and turn in for the night after a long, stimulating day of travel.

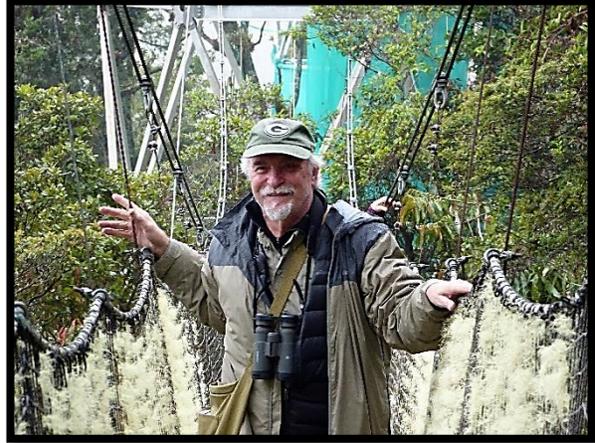
Day 3: Wayqecha Canopy Walk; Kosan Road Birding; Cock-of-the-Rock Lek and Lodge

We awoke to views of the densely-vegetated cloud forests on the flanks of Manu National Park. We were now on the edge of a vast wilderness and would be for the next ten days. After an ample breakfast fortified by strong Peruvian coffee, we set out for a hike to a canopy walk just outside the

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

lodge. On the lodge grounds we had good looks at White-chested Elaenia, Great Thrush, White-collared Jay and Amethyst-throated Sun angel.



After about a mile of hiking through the cloud forest, we came to the start of the canopy walk. It consisted of swinging bridges made of cables and wooden walkways connected to metal towers that spanned a deep densely-vegetated gorge. Birds were abundant here, including Hooded Mountain Tanager, Grass Green Tanager (an electric green bird flashing through the canopy), and Rufous-breasted Chat Tyrant.

Prior to departing from Wayqecha Lodge, a flurry of bird activity occurred just outside. This group included Masked Flower Piercer, Tyrian Metaltail and Long-tailed Sylph hummingbirds. We packed up and headed down the steep-sided gorge bordering Manu Park to Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge.



On the way we stopped often to check out roadside birds. Along this road, you are always on the edge of wilderness with the expectation of seeing birds and wildlife.

Wonderful sightings did occur here, such as Sicklet-winged Guan, a perched Black and Chestnut Eagle, Masked Trogon, White-collared Jay and Cinnamon Flycatcher. As Linda said of the latter species, "Here I I am, what more could you ask for than me?" It was a good question.

Photo: Long-tailed Sylph, Greg Smith

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



We stopped about a mile from our next lodge at the Cock-of-the-Rock lek at what was supposed to be a time of high activity. Even outside the lek you could hear strange grunting sounds within. Once inside a wooden viewing platform overlooking a steep forested area., the lek activity was intense. A dozen bright red Cock-of-the-Rock males postured, called, fluttered and chased one-another. It was a bizarre yet beautiful spectacle.

David quipped that if Salvador Dali had designed a bird, it might have been like the oddly-shaped and gaudily-colored Cock-of-the Rock.



Part of our group opted to walk from the lek to the lodge and continue birding along the way. This proved to be a good decision. We encountered a female Cock-of-the-Rock, along with a group of Dusky Green Oropendola engaged in nest-building activities an aptly-named Smoke-colored Pewee, a three-striped Warbler, and both Spectacled and Slate-throated Redstarts. This was the grand finale for a great day in Manu.



Day 4: Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge and Vicinity

Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge (CORL) dining room overlooks an area with fruit and hummingbird feeders that attracts a wide variety of birds and mammals. From this outstanding vantage point, our group saw Sparkling Violetear, Booted Racquet tail, Violet-fronted

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

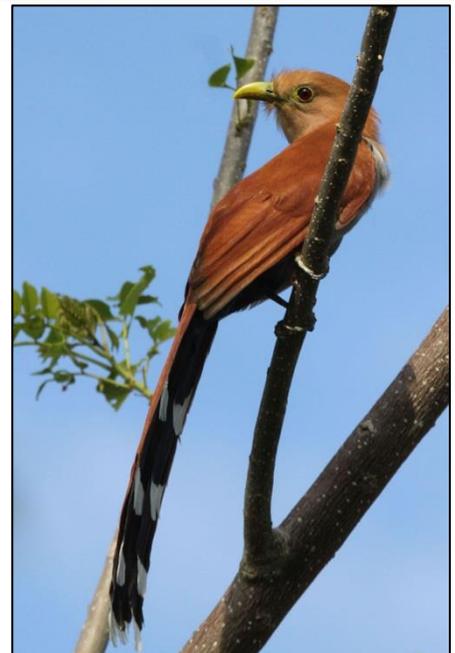
Brilliant, Wire-crested Thorntail and White-bellied Woodstar hummingbirds. Other bird highlights here included: Silver-beaked Tanager, Orange-bellied Euphonia, and Orange-bellied Euphonia.

Just as we were about to tear ourselves away from this birding hot spot, a troupe of six Brown Capuchin monkeys came through. They entertained us for some time, staring longingly at the lodge, leaping through the trees and shrubs, playing with one-another, and making a variety of vocal sounds ranging from cooing to chattering to screeching. Bolivian Ground Squirrel and an Agouti added to the mammalian show.



We then took to the road leading to the lodge, where we walked stretches of it with the van waiting for us at the end of our forays. Here we found Blue-necked, Saffron-crowned and Golden Tanagers. A Squirrel Cuckoo perched and watched us close to the road, chattering occasionally. Slate-throated Redstarts called and displayed with their tails fanning out. A Golden-crowned Flycatcher perched atop a small tree for several minutes with a green insect lodged firmly in its bill.

Further up the road, we birded from a bridge at the base of a large waterfall with frothy white-water current rushing beneath it in the Kosnipata River. Here we found male and female Torrent Ducks alternately perching on rocks and diving into the river to feed.



Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

Photo: Peg Abbott



At a rock outcrop beside the road, Black and White Swallows flew in and out of nesting crevices, some exiting with fetal sacs from their nests. Then we had an excellent view of an adult and juvenile Lyre-tailed Nightjar, resting on the rocks only 20 yards away, resembling large feathered lizards.

Mammals were again a prominent part of our morning. This time a large Peruvian Woolly Monkey swung from limbs, called noisily and sat on a limb resembling a small gorilla. At times it hung for prolonged periods of time by a branch by its tail.



We returned to Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge for a delicious lunch featuring local potato entrees and watermelon followed by a brief siesta. Then it was time for another birding adventure just out the door. We drove a short distance on the road in the Chontachaca area. At a bridge close to the lodge we saw Crested and Russet-backed Oropendola flying over the river to their pendulous nests.

Continuing down this road we found Lemon-browed, Streaked and Social Flycatchers and a Golden-olive Woodpecker. Nearby we saw a male and female Purple Honeycreeper and two Plumbeous Kites. A Bluish-fronted Jacamar and several Speckled Chachalaca rounded off the afternoon's sightings.

At dusk we returned to COTR Lodge to observe its fabulous feeding station. Hummingbirds were having their version of the war of the worlds, viciously attacking competitors at the feeders. Sparkling Violetears, Green Hermit, Booted Racquet Tail and White-throated Hillstars were among the birds competing for sugar water at the feeders. At times you could hear the impact when they collided.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

At dark we reviewed our rapidly expanding checklist while enjoying another fine dinner at the lodge, this one featuring homemade pumpkin soup with chicken and vegetables.

Day 5: Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge; Manakin Trail; Villa Carmen



We awoke to a tropical rain shower, and thus birded from the protection of the screened-in porch that overlooks the feeders. A Three-stripe Warbler flitted through the brush, then a rare Bronzy Inca hummingbird came to the feeders. Blue-necked, Bay Headed and Paradise Tanagers put on a wildly colorful show in the nearby tree tops. A Yellow-bellied Bush Tanager and several Sepia-capped Flycatchers flew into the nearby Bamboo trees. A large bird moved through the brush, then perched low on a nearby tree – a Crimson-bellied Woodpecker!

Just about the time that feeder activity slowed down, we hiked the Manakin trail behind the lodge. Here, we searched at length for two Yugna Manakins in their separate territories. Although they called loudly and often, it was still hard to find them. About half of our group did.

We then heard a very loud call coming from two different birds within a small area. These were even louder and more persistent than the Manakins, and even more elusive. Mark, however, managed to see one of the Brown Tinamous responsible for the vocalizations.

To complete our morning birding adventure, we walked a small portion of the road below the lodge to a bridge over the white-water river. Here we found two Torrent Ducks and a Fasciated Tiger Heron hunting along the river bank.

We then enjoyed another fine lunch at COTR Lodge and thanked the owners profusely for their hospitality. Before we left, there were even more birds to behold on the feeders, including Marble-faced Bristle Tyrant and Golden Tanagers, the latter of which caused David to quip: “You need to put on sunglasses to look at those!”



At this point we hit the road for Villa Carmen, stopping

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Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

frequently to search for birds and wildlife along the way. Our first stop yielded several Long-tailed Tyrants, eventually chased off of their perches by a Plumbeous Kite. A Boat-billed Flycatcher and Black-faced Dacnis came close by and a Solitary Eagle flew high above clutching a snake in its talons.

Another exciting stop was for an Amazonian Umbrella Bird that fortuitously flew across the road then vanished into thick brush. Our keen group soon found it again, and it eventually came close to us, perching in the open with a large green bug in its bill. What a great sight!

We carried on through several small hamlets to the entrance of Villa Carmen Research Station. As soon as we got out of the van, Bill found a Red-capped Cardinal. After an orientation to this attractive place with several ponds, a marsh, woodlands, and a feeding station, we went on a short but productive bird walk. Among our findings were multiple Hoatzins, Scarlet and Red and Yellow Macaws, Blue-headed Parrot and Purplish and Violaceous Jays.

We enjoyed an evening meal in a large screened dining area to the tune of owls hooting and forest falcons making their sad, plaintive cries. We were in yet another lively, exciting rainforest setting.

Photo: Red-capped Cardinal, Bob Rodrigues



Day 6: Calpa Parrot Lick; Antpitta Area; Picopata and Back to Villa Carmen

On a sultry tropical morning, we started birding very early in order to catch two local spectacles at Villa Carmen: The Macaw/Parrot Lick and the Antpitta feeding area. First up after breakfast was the Macaw lick. At this former quarry, the rock and earth walls are approximately 100 feet high. Macaws and parrots congregate here to gather clay to offset the acidic components of their mostly fruit diets.

Today we were pleased as multiple flocks of Chestnut-fronted Macaws and White-eyed Parrots gathered by the dozens at the lick. It was definitely a “wow!” nature experience, and one that only exists in a few parts of the world, like Manu National Park.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



Following this spectacle, we headed to the Antpitta area. Our group assembled quietly in a place where a Villa Carmen staffer puts out black mealworms to attract the antpittas at the same time each day. We heard the shrill repeated whistled call of the Antpitta for about ten minutes before it went silent for a while then appeared in the feeding zone. We all had great looks at an Amazonian Antipitta. During the rest of the morning we hiked trails and birded. Among our sightings were a half-dozen Black-tailed and Blue Crowned Trogons. In addition, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift and Greater Yellow-headed Vulture soared through the skies. In the deeper rain forest, we found White-lined and Manu Antbird, along with Little Woodpecker, Red-billed and Wedge-billed Woodcreeper and a vividly-colored Orange-backed Troupial.

Overlooking the broad and fast-flowing Pini Pini River, we watched multiple White-banded Swifts in flight and perching. At lunch, the Villa Carmen staff had prepared a cake and sang Happy Birthday to Judy in English and Spanish.

In the afternoon, we took a siesta during the hottest part of the day as thunder rumbled and a few raindrops fell. Just before departing on a mid-afternoon outing, we stopped to look at a family of four Night Monkeys huddled together in a perch about 15 feet up in a tree. Then we journeyed into the nearby town of Pilcopata to purchase rubber boots to use on the rest of the trip. It was most interesting shopping in the small general stores in this town. One of the shops had chickens running around inside along with local vendors who were more than happy to help us out. Most of us purchased boots— a sizeable contribution of ecotourism to this town's economy.

Just outside the stores in the main intersection of town was a Scarlet Macaw perched on utility wires. As David cleverly said when he saw this, "I've heard of a one-horse town, but now we have a one-Macaw town."

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Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



Photo by Lori Cohen

After our town visit, we walked and birded most of the way back to Villa Carmen on the road. The day had cooled and the rain ceased. Birds were active and visible. In one tree alone, we saw Turkey and Greater Yellow-headed Vultures and Chestnut-eared and Lettered Aracari. Short-billed Honeycreeper was another good find during this stretch – an uncommon bird for the area. As we reached the lodge, a Gray-breasted Sabrewing (hummingbird) fed on large ornamental flowers and a Fine-barred Piculet moved through the hedges bordering the buildings.

After another fine dinner, we took a short walk to see three Cuvier's Dwarf Caimans in one of Villa Carmen's ponds. One of them made a violent surge toward a fish. Then we heard Xavier speak about the function of the Wayqecha and La Villa Biological Stations. It was nice knowing that our visits helped pay for the research and conservation work being done in these remote stations.

Day 7: Villa Carmen; Birding to Atalaya; Rio Madre de Dios, Manu Learning Center

Today we descended the rest of the way from the Andes to Amazonia, following the Pini Pini River to its confluence with the Rio Madre de Dios. We birded one last time before leaving Villa Carmen, and as always, had good results including a Brown Tinamou and a White Hawk, the latter in the sky while we loaded the van.

On the way to Atalaya, we did some road birding. Among our finds were: Swallow-tailed Kite and Gray-lined Hawk. We took in a sweeping view or "mirador" of the confluence of the Pini Pini and Rio Madre de Dios – both major rivers feeding eventually into the Amazon. Then we descended to the end of the road, had a picnic lunch in the river town of Atalaya, and boarded our motor canoe for the two-hour trip to the Manu Learning Center.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



In the tropical heat, the sheltered motor canoe ride was refreshing. Along the river we spotted several Black-tailed Swift, Snowy Egret, Osprey, Neotropic Cormorant and White-banded Swallow. Our boat ride through riffles and meanders, expertly piloted by our boatmen from Atalaya, led us to Manu Learning Center, a place tucked into the forest.

Here an assembly of pleasant-looking thatched roof wooden structures would house us for the night. We were greeted by the host with fresh glasses of lemonade and checked into our rooms.

In the mid-afternoon, we gathered for a walk through the learning center trails. A volunteer from Australia led us on our hike. He first took us to an impressive Mirador (view point) overlooking the vast Rio Madre de Dios valley. At this scenic spot we took group photos and noted bird species including: Capped Heron, Black Caracara, Yellow-bellied Elaenia and a Zone-tailed Hawk. We then looped a small wetland area, spotting a Black-fronted Nunbird along the way, and returned to the main campus to clean up and have dinner.



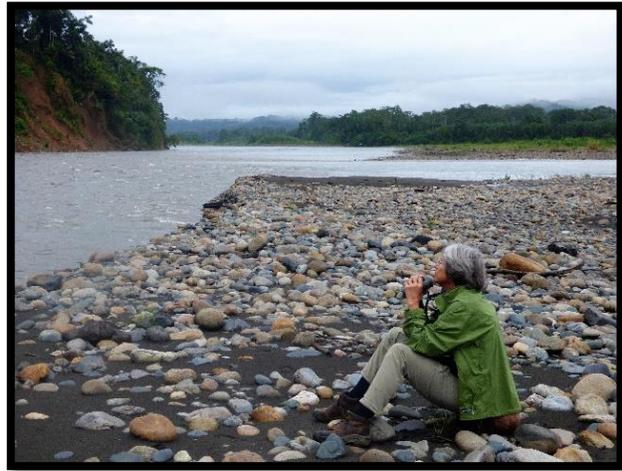
At 6 PM, Stephanie, the site manager spoke to us about the work of this center. We learned that Manu National Park has "faunal diversity that exceeds that of any place on earth." For example, Manu has 1,000 + species of birds (10% of the world's total); 1,300 species of butterflies, 200 mammals, 150 amphibians and 130 reptiles. Her organization recruits young people as interns to participate in scientific and conservation work.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

Day 8: Manu Learning Center; Macaw/Parrot Lick; Rio Madre de Dios; Manu Wildlife Center Lodge

This morning, some opted to awake pre-dawn to board the motorized canoe for a short ride to a viewpoint of macaw and parrot clay licks. We were there at first light as the rosy dawn cleared with views of the mountains behind. Flocks of parrots and macaws started flying in to perches in trees above the reddish clay "lick" bluffs. Chestnut-fronted and Blue and Yellow Macaws, Blue-headed and Yellow-crowned Parrots congregated on the lick. Occasionally they would scatter, their chestnut and yellow tinted wings flashing. Loud Macaw and parrot chatter permeated the atmosphere.



That night, in addition to all the other animal and insect sounds of the tropical rainforest, we experienced an incredible thunderstorm from the shelter and comfort of our rooms. Everyone marveled at the frequency and intensity of the thunderclaps and lightning. We returned to a substantial breakfast with good strong Peruvian coffee and said a fond farewell to the staff and volunteers at Manu Learning Center. Their hospitality was superb and the jungle lodge ambience, unique and memorable.

We boarded our motorized canoes and headed downstream to the next lodge on the swollen (after last night's rain) Rio Madre de Dios. Immediately our keen group of birders started spotting avifauna: Little Blue and Cocoli Herons, Roseate Spoonbill, Cattle Egret and our first Ringed Kingfisher of the trip. At Boca Manu, where the Manu River meets Rio Madre de Dios, there is a small village. We stopped here for lunch at a large table inside one of the mercantiles (general stores) in town. Dogs, chickens and a wide assortment of products were all close at hand. We were grateful to be out of the sun in a place with shade, cold drinks and bathrooms.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

The last leg of our boat trip was from Boca Manu to Manu Wildlife Center. The journey featured a calm, smoothly-flowing stretch of river with more birds to be seen, such as Horned Screamer, Yellow-billed Tern, Pale-eyed Blackbird, King Vulture and even a Bat Falcon. We docked at our forest home for the next four nights and tucked into our respective thatched roof cabins, surround by chips, coos, squawks and other assorted forms of chatter from myriad species of birds.

Day 9: Blanquillo Macaw/Parrot Lick; Canopy Tower; Owl Prowl

In the cool of the early morning, we launched our power canoe to head for the famous Blanquillo Macaw lick. On the way our group was alert as usual at 5:30 AM. We found small groups of Black Skimmers and Wood storks along the banks. We then walked about a mile to reach the oxbow lake that had multiple 20-30-foot rock outcrops where macaws and parrots nourished themselves with clay. They do this to balance their PH since they eat a highly acidic fruit-based diet.



The hike to the lake started quietly but became increasingly noisy as we reached the blind. Hundreds of macaws and parrots were squawking loudly as they flew in and perched near the lick. Soon after we arrived, they began to settle onto the reddish-colored exposed earth: Green and Red Macaw, Mealy-headed, Orange-cheeked, Blue-headed and Yellow-crowned Parrots by the dozens gathered. Later they were joined by Cobalt-winged Parakeet.

This was a grand spectacle right to the end when a dozen Green and red Macaws gathered on the lick as a group in brilliant sunlight, a loudly memorable performance – both in color and sound.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



As if the macaw/parrot show was not enough, we also saw a Masked Tityra, Magpie Tanager, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift, at least a dozen Eastern Kingbirds and a couple of Bolivian Red Howler Monkeys in the same general area. What an unforgettable morning!

Back at the lodge we had lunch and a siesta during the hot early afternoon. In the mid-afternoon we hiked a short trail through the tropical rainforest to a massive canopy tower affixed to a giant Kapok tree. Several hundred feet up were two platforms lodged into the huge tree platforms like classic, but much more substantial, tree houses. From this vantage point we were able to observe flowering tree tops and species of birds in flight at eye-level, including Blue and Yellow Macaw that were cast in a golden glow by the late afternoon sun.

Just before dinner, Andrea took us on an owl walk. As we left the lodge, she found a Common Pauraque in clear view on the top of a 12-foot high shrub. We watched in awe as it suddenly leapt straight up to capture a bug. This was an athletic feat for this otherwise sleepy looking yet stealthy nightjar.

Deeper into the forest near a clearing, Andrea called out a Crested Owl. It responded to her calls repeatedly then perched in a nearby tree, its eyes flashing in her light. Then it flew twice to different perches, making several cameo appearances. We also heard a Great Potoo and a Tawny-headed Tropical Screech Owl on our walk.

Day 10: Cocha Blanco Oxbow Lake; Manu Wildlife Center and Trails

Today's early start featured gray skies and cool temperatures, a welcome relief from yesterday's hotter weather. We started as usual on a pleasant boat ride to the start of a trail just a few miles down-river to the Blanco Oxbow Lake. Following a 20-minute stroll through the rainforest, we reached a covered dock with a small, self-propelled paddle boat. Thanks to our strong, capable boat men, we were able to survey the placid of the Oxbow Lake while they paddled. Within a few paddle strokes, new species

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

appeared: Anhinga, Wattled Jacana, Sun Grebe, Black-capped Donacobius, Greater Ani and Purus Jacamar among them. Hoatzins were numerous and noisy as were Horned Screamer, Limpkin and in the distant trees, Bolivian Red Howler Monkeys.



photo by Bill Drucker

As storm clouds approached, we retreated to the boat shelter, and then rode the power canoe back to the lodge in light rain. A gently rumbling mid-day thunderstorm kept us inside for a while. It provided us with time to catch up on our journals, photo editing, food and rest. While we were having lunch, a Reddish Hermit hummingbird came to the feeders – the third hummingbird species seen here.



The storm broke shortly after lunch and we were out and about birding once again. This time we explored the lodge grounds more thoroughly, including the nearby boardwalk over a large stream and wetlands complex. We found interesting birds there, including Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers going in and out of their nest hole on a palm snag. A Gray-crowned Flycatcher flew over the wetlands and stream then perched conspicuously on a thin branch. Rufous-breasted Wood Rails called loudly in what reminded us of a cartoon tune in its repetitive and taunting tone. A Squirrel Cuckoo came out into an opening just 20

yards away and displayed its brilliant light brown plumage and long spotted tail – such a gorgeous bird!

On the way back, our group saw an Amazonian Motmot and a Chestnut-capped Puffbird. As daylight faded, we caught up on our bird list prior to owling once again in the early evening.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

Day 11: Cocha Camungo Oxbow Lake; Canopy Tower; Manu Wildlife Center

A morning shower failed to deter us from our plans today. We boarded the motor canoe and headed to our next destination: Cocha Camungo Oxbow Lake. Even in the rain, our intrepid crew noticed Wood Storks, Skimmers, Jacanas and a rare Red Brocket Deer during the boat trip to our destination.

At Camungo, we hiked for 20 minutes to a dock, and once again boarded a flat boat paddled by our hard-working boat men. These guys seemed capable of most anything: paddling, navigating, hauling luggage, laundry, cooking, spotting birds and wildlife...you name it.

As we arrived to the dock, we flushed a Collared Hawk who perched in a nearby tree. Several beautiful Masked Crimson Tanagers flew and perched only 15 yards away. As we started the slow, quiet paddle boat tour of Camungo Oxbow Lake, Black Donacobius, Purus Jacamar and a Slaty-backed Hawk appeared at close range. Further down the tranquil lake, Sungrebes crisscrossed in front of us, Fasciated and Striated Herons along with Hoatzins in the shrubs along the banks.



After this delightful paddle/birding experience, we walked a short distance down the trail and came to a gigantic Kapok tree with multiple flights of metal stairs leading high up to a tree-fort-like canopy tower. We proceeded to climb the 230 steps alongside the giant trunk of the 500-year-old Kapok tree. Once on top we were rewarded not only with sweeping views, but also with avian visitors. A Masked Tityra called and perched on a massive nearby branch. Then came a Dull-capped Attila – a bird that is anything but dull. Three other birds with a creamy, yellow colors streaked below us and landed in trees where we could see them: Creamy-colored Woodpeckers! They are a sight to behold.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



Two other brilliant blue birds appeared near our canopy perch: A Plum-throated Cotinga and a Blue Dacnis. An extremely cute and petite Yellow-browed Tody Flycatcher hunted bugs in the branches of our tree, pausing at times in the open where we could admire him.



In the meantime, two Plumbeous Kites flew to our tree, just 30 feet above us with nesting materials in their beaks, intent on building a nest nearby. Soaring around the tree at eye-level were Greater Yellow-headed Vultures and a Swallow-tailed Kite. To add to the show, two Bolivian Red Howler Monkeys were illuminated by the morning sun on their perches, just a few trees distant from us. This tree was a special perch in an extraordinary place. We lingered here for an hour before descending back to earth.

After hiking back to the river, we boated back to our lodge, had lunch and siesta before packing up for tomorrow's early departure from the lodge and the magical world of Manu National Park. The remainder of the day was spent packing and relaxing and was as always, entertaining due to the ever-present birds, mammals, butterflies and more that live in the jungle. That night, we went to sleep to a duet by Common Pauraques.

Day 12: River and Road Trip to Puerto Maldonado

On our last morning at Manu Wildlife Center we savored our final dawn chorus in the tropical rainforest: The loud, grumpy-sounding Scarlet Macaw chatter; the Great Potoo uttering a prolonged Blaaah!; Oropendolas piercing, liquid calls resembling video game zapping sounds; and the Blue-throated Guan's call that sounds like a stick being dragged over wooden shingles.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

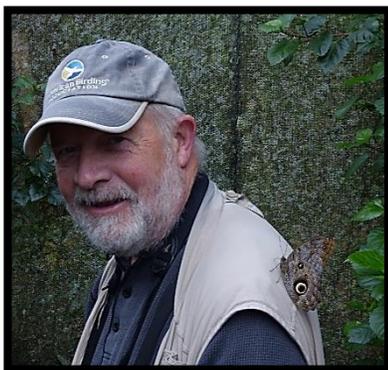


Despite an early 5:15 AM breakfast, the staff at Manu brought out two birthday cakes for Bill and Mark who share October 22 as their birthday. We sang Happy Birthday in English and Spanish. When we finished the songs, Bolivian Howler Monkeys and White-throated Toucans seemed to join the chorus.

At 6 AM we boarded our canoe for a several hour journey in pretty early morning lighting and comfortably cool temperatures. At the small riverfront boom town of Boca de Colorado, we said farewell to our exceptional river boatmen as a small fleet of SUVs came to pick us up for the next leg of the journey – a one-hour drive to the next power canoe crossing of a river.

Our last leg of the journey was via mini vans on several hours of gravel road then highway to Puerto Maldonado. We stopped for lunch at a pleasant shaded café then pressed on to the largest city we had seen in almost two weeks: Puerto Maldonado. Our hotel on the main street was clean, cool and welcome with modern conveniences that we had lived without for the past ten days in Manu.

We explored this thriving, booming city on the edge of the frontier, then went out to a nice buffet dinner on the waterfront of the Rio Madre de Dios. One of the entrees was a traditional Peruvian meal of catfish baked in plantain leaves with abundant vegetable and other toppings – delicious! A second birthday celebration was held for Bill and Mark, this time with a homemade banana cake.



Day 13: Puerto Maldonado Waterfront and Butterfly Farm; Travel to Cusco

We appreciated having a relaxed start today, with breakfast by the pool and outdoor lobby prior to heading to the downtown waterfront park for birding and sight-seeing. We were joined here by local parents taking graduation photos of their sons and daughters in fancy blue gowns. Meanwhile we also found several bird species: Brown-chested Martin, Saffron Finch and Chestnut-throated Seedeater.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

On the way to the airport, we stopped at the Peru Butterfly Farm – an impressive interpretive center with top-notch photos, educational signs and landscaped butterfly enclosures. Peru has 20% of the world's butterflies, so it is an appropriate place for this facility. Two Giant Owl Butterflies attached themselves to Mark's vest while we were walking through the enclosure. A Blue-headed Emerald Hummingbird found nectar in the flowers by the gift shop.



After an outdoor picnic lunch at the Butterfly Farm, we headed to the airport and our flight to Cusco. Our flight arrived in Cusco with its welcome cool, crisp air in the late afternoon. We had a nice dinner complete with live music and dancing. Then we bid farewell to Sheila in her home town; she had joined us to handle the complicated trip logistics from Cusco through Manu and back. We also bid farewell to Linda and Karen who were heading home from Cusco. The rest of us continued on to the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu.

Day 14: Exploration of Cusco

Our hotel was in el centro (downtown) Cusco, convenient to its museums, shops and squares. We all enjoyed exploring this beautiful historic former capitol of the Incan empire. Among the places we visited were Plaza de las Armas, the central cathedrals, The Inca Museum and the central market. Random strikes, demonstrations and people leading llamas down the streets dressed in traditional attire added color and character to this compelling city. This was a good way to transition to the cultural emphasis that was provided in the next three days.

Photo by Bill Drucker



Day 15: Machu Picchu Extension Begins: Chinchero; Moray Agricultural Site; Salt Mines; Ollantaytambo Ruins and Historic Town

Our slightly smaller group embarked today on its extension to the Sacred Valley and Inca country. We were joined by

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

Juan Jose, a cultural interpreter for the rest of our journey. Our first stop was to a textile-weaving display in Chinchero where two Andean women dressed in traditional garb showed us how to spin and comb wool and alpaca. We then purchased a fair number of their products. The cool, rainy weather further motivated us to buy their sweaters.



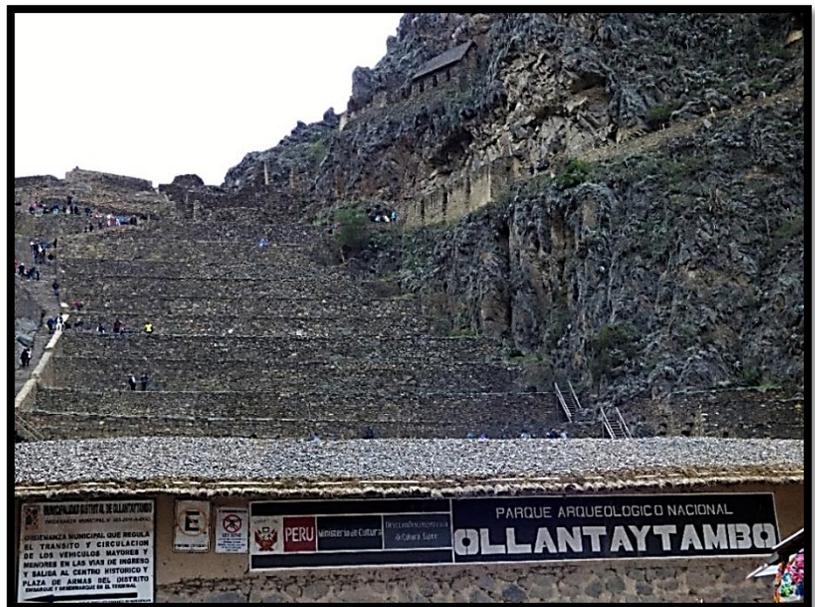
We then went to Moray to see the terraced remains of an Incan experimental agricultural site where they had tested different crops in different soil and temperature conditions. The Incas were

sophisticated and ahead of their time when it came to the cultivation of crops. Nearby we happened to find a White-browed Chat Tyrant, another new bird for the trip.

Lunch was at a bustling restaurant with a large buffet.

Our last stop of the day was in the incredibly picturesque former Inca town of Ollantaytambo. Set in a steep valley with Incan archaeological sites and walls visible in every direction, this town is a beautifully-preserved historic monument. Some of its homes were actually built by the Incans 500 years ago and remain inhabited today.

The ruins above town included a terraced hillside with a temple to the sun on top, a temple of water, and numerous dwellings that when in use would have had thatched or wooden



Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

roofs. We noted large food storage areas very high on the hillsides, fountains and water flowed throughout the complex. During our visit we had a terrific look at a Streaked Flycatcher and a Chiguanco Thrush.



Photos by Lori Cohen

After the visit to the ruins we wandered the vast market and a bit of Ollantaytambo. Andean people with their colorful woven scarfs and elaborate hats sold their wares. We enjoyed seeing the women carrying their babies wrapped securely in special woolen “agrayos.” Although Machu Picchu gets most of the notoriety in this area, Ollantaytambo impressed us with its living history and well-preserved archaeological sites.

Day 16: Pakaritampu Hotel Grounds; Train from Ollantaytambo to Aguas Calientes; Machu Picchu

This morning we strolled the gardens behind Hotel Paritampu. Surrounded by floral displays, Incan walls and towering peaks, this was a stunning place to bird.

In this setting we also found an assortment of new trip hummingbirds: Bearded Mountaineer, Giant and Black-tailed Trainbearer. We also found two new pigeon and dove species: Spot Winged Pigeon and Bare-faced Ground Dove. And then there were tanagers: Blue and Yellow and Rust and Yellow Tanagers, with a Black-backed Grosbeak nearby.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



A train took us the first leg of the journey to Machu Picchu. We rode in a dome car with clear views of the awe-inspiring vertical landscape of the Andes with the Urubamba River below. They served us food and drinks, adding to the comfort and enjoyment of this scenic ride. Several hours later we pulled into the town of Aguas Calientes, where we exited the train and walked through an extensive network of markets with every color in the rainbow sewn or knitted into garments. We checked into our riverside hotel and paused for a short break prior to lunch and our first visit to Machu Picchu.

The bus to Machu Picchu loaded after lunch in Aguas Calientes on its way to one of the world's most iconic archaeological sites. We soon found ourselves in

the steepest canyons yet, with views of even higher peaks

behind. Then our bus switch-backed uphill to the base of Machu Picchu. This is a place where the best of scenic mountain grandeur meets the apex of human design. No number of photos or stories can adequately prepare you for the first sight of Machu Picchu. It is beyond compare.

Our cultural guide, Juan, led us through the site, stopping periodically to interpret various walls and structures. The Incas did not leave written records of their civilization; their history was literally written in stone architecture. They demonstrated unbelievable competence in the design, construction, engineering, road building, agriculture and astronomy. One wonders what else they would have accomplished had they not been conquered by the Spanish.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



Seeing the Inca's handiwork close-up adds to one's appreciation of their society which existed half-a-century ago. We wandered through the extensive site until dusk. In the midst of this amazing place we also had great looks at several Andean Guan, heard an Inca Wren that several of us saw briefly, and watched an adult male Kestrel fly just below us and at one point only feet away from Andrea. Machu Picchu will reside prominently in our memories long after our visit. It is a spectacular shrine to a vanquished civilization.

Day 17: Machu Picchu; Aguas Calientes and Inkaterra Hotel Gardens; Return to Cusco

Today, a small part of our group arose very early to see Machu Picchu from a different perspective at first light. *Here is an excerpt from Lori, who was one of the intrepid Machu Picchu hikers/visitors on this morning:*



"Our early morning began in the rain, yet with our ever- optimistic guide Andrea we all had positive attitudes. Mark emphasized this by saying, "just don't say the 'r' (rain) word. We were all excited to have another chance to visit this remarkable place.

After showing our passports upon entry to the site, we walked in a different area than the day before --heading toward the Temple of the Sun and taking slow careful steps as we climbed. There were quite a few backpackers entering

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Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

the ruins from the Inca trail; they looked tired and relieved to have finally arrived to their destination. This trail had some good habitat for birding and we soon heard the unmistakable song of the Inca Wren. We looked and listened for a few minutes, and soon the birds came closer to the trail. We all got good looks at two of these small but charismatic birds.

We continued our walk, and saw the elusive Brown Tinamou, Tufted Tit-Tyrant, and Sierran Elaenia. We were rewarded for our efforts as the clouds and rain storms diminished and partly sunny conditions prevailed, illuminating the ruins and some of the surrounding mountains.

We spent a good bit of time admiring the views, taking pictures and just **being** in this magnificent place. I was struck not only by the ruins, but by the verdant, lush, steep mountains surrounding the site that were some of the most impressive mountains I have ever seen. The magic of Machu Picchu will stay with me forever.”



The Machu Picchu group re-joined the rest of our group in Aguas Calientes in mid-morning. The latter group had been closely monitoring the Urubamba River. They found an active Cock-of-the-Rock nest with the female making repeated forays to wooded areas and then returning to the nest. In addition, they saw Torrent Tyrannulets, White-capped Dippers, and a Sharp-tailed Streamkeeper. A Roadside Hawk patrolled this section of river and made at least two successful kills during the morning.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler



As a group we then hiked through Aguas Calientes to the Inkaterra Hotel grounds and orchid garden. Adrian, our guide from the hotel grounds said that there are nearly three thousand species of orchids in Peru. We also found Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Collared Inca, Thick-billed Euphonia, Beryl Spangled Tanager and excellent looks at a Cock-of-the-Rock and two Andean Motmots.

We hiked back into Aguas Calientes for lunch and returned to our hotel prior to boarding the train back to Ollantaytambo. There we spotted a pair of White-capped Dippers plying the raging white-water currents of the Urubamba River. Two in our group opted for massage therapy during our siesta in Aguas Calientes.



In the late PM, we took the train back to Ollantaytambo, another very scenic ride made even more special by a devil dancer and fashion show provided in the aisle of our train car! The two-hour train ride flew by and we were soon on a bus headed to Cusco where we had our final celebration dinner.

Peru: Manu National Park with Machu Picchu Extension

October 10-28, 2018 with Woody Wheeler

Day 18: Cusco to Lima and Flights Home

Sounds of fireworks and a marching band greeted us as we departed from our downtown Cusco hotel. Such a festive city this is, with so many compelling shops, museums and plaza parks to explore. Cusco retains its historic roots as the former capitol of the Inca empire.

Our flight to Lima was smooth. Once there, most of us headed for our day rooms at the hotel by the airport to rest, clean up and have two more meals together. At our final supper we shared things we would miss about Peru:

- Sounds of the tropical rainforest
- The verdant rainforest and its myriad life forms
- Tranquility
- Peru's vibrant culture
- Good soups and potatoes
- Diverse, dramatic geography
- The sound of Spanish being spoken
- Awesome thunderstorms
- Varied transport (foot, motor canoe, train, plane, vehicles, etc.)
- Warm hospitality



These and many other special memories of this uniquely diverse part of the world will linger as we return to our respective homes.

Trip Report & photos by Woody Wheeler except as credited to others