

## **Trip Report South-Eastern Peru 23.12.2014 – 09.01.2015**

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After a working stay of my girlfriend in Peru, I joined her at Christmas and we did a birding tour and holiday in South-Eastern Peru, visiting Machu Picchu, Manu road, Tambopata and Lake Titicaca. Although our visit was at the start of the rainy season, we were lucky that the weather and landslides hardly had an impact on our program. Our trip was taken aback a bit by health issues, a really nasty cold I brought from Switzerland and some altitude sickness, but was otherwise very enjoyable and relaxing, and also relatively successful with 414 bird species or 387 lifers recorded.

### ***Itinerary***

23.12.2014: arrival Lima & recovery.

24.12.2014: Lima, trip to Pucusana / Villa Marsh cancelled due to cold, flight to Cuzco.

25.12.2014: train ride to Aguas Calientes, birding along the railroad tracks.

26.12.2014: early-morning bus to Machu Picchu and birding along the upper access road, afternoon train back to Cuzco.

27.12.2014: drive to Manu road, with stops at Laguna Huaypo-Chacan, Lake Huacarpay, at a roadside site for Bearded Mountaineer & Giant Hummingbird and long the road to the Cock-of-the-Rock (COR) lodge.

28.12.2014: Full-day birding above the COR lodge.

29.12.2014: Full-day birding below the COR lodge, down to the Madre de Dios river including a short visit to Amazonia lodge (closed during the rainy season) for some special birds as Rufous-crested Coquette.

30.12.2014: Birding between COR lodge and Wayqecha Biological Station.

31.12.2014: Birding above Wayqecha, drive back to Cuzco with stop at high-altitude lake for Giant Coot.

01.01.2015: Flight to Puerto Maldonado, transfer to Posadas Amazonas (PA) lodge / Tambopata reserve, late afternoon at canopy tower.

02.01.2015: PA, visit of oxbow lake, Macaw clay lick and bamboo forest birding.

03.01.2015: PA, canopy tower, forest walk to „big tree“ (riverine forest), farm visit and night walk.

04.01.2015: PA canopy tower, transfer to Puerto Maldonado and flight to Cuzco.

05.01.2015: Tourist bus ride from Cuzco to Puno with cultural stops along the way.

06.01.2015: Transfer to Uros community, fishing & relaxing on floating islands on Lake Titicaca.

07.01.2015: Birding boat tour on Lake Titicaca, transfer to Puno.

08.01.2015: Visit of Sillustani ruins and lake, transfer to Juliaca and flight to Lima.

09.01.2015: Day in Lima, departure back home.

### ***Organization***

December and January are suboptimal months to visit South-East Peru as the start of the rainy season might not only prevent birding through strong and frequent rainfalls, but also leads to frequent landslides blocking the Manu road and to huge river levels and loads of floating wood in the lowland Amazon basin, making river travel more risky and longer. As Omar Diaz Villalobos from Peru Birding Tours ([www.perubirdingtours.com](http://www.perubirdingtours.com)) has previously run Dec/Jan tours to that region, we requested for a 13-day tour to Machu Picchu, Manu road and Tambopata, which he arranged for a quote indicated in standard itineraries on the Peru Birding Tours homepage, plus a 500 USD pp surcharge due to

increased xmas/new year hotel rates. Omar was our guide for this tour and we enjoyed his good and fun company, as well as the super smooth organization. We also profited a lot from his site knowledge and ID skills, much needed by me as a first-time visitor to the Neotropics. Unfortunately, Omar had to leave us before the last part in Tambopata, because another guide previously assigned for a 20-day tour in North Peru cancelled last minute and Omar had to take over that group in an emergency. For Tambopata, everything was nicely organized by Rainforest Expeditions running the Posadas Amazonas lodge and we had a good time there in the end, but the lodge had no specialized bird guides and Omar's knowledge especially of calls was very much missed. Luckily, I brought my recording and playback equipment...

After the organized birding tour ending in Puerto Maldonado, my girlfriend organized the rest of the journey: We flew to Cuzco and travelled to Puno with a full-day tourist bus stopping at interesting cultural sites on the way ([www.inkaexpress.com](http://www.inkaexpress.com)). After a night in Puno, we spent two days in the Uros community on Lake Titicaca and visited the Sillustani ruins on our last day before returning to Lima and then home.

### ***Notes on sites & hotels***

Lima: Some common and feral species were spotted in coastal parks in Miraflores and Barranco and along the beach. Hotel: Torre Blanca (<http://torreblancaperu.com>), nice and reasonably priced hotel close to the seafront in Miraflores.

Cuzco: Hotels: First two nights at a hostel close to the Plaza des Armas. Third night at Royal Inka hotel, a quite upscale and nice hotel directly at the Plaza Regocijo. The fourth night organized ourselves, we stayed at Ecopackers hostel ([www.ecopackersperu.com](http://www.ecopackersperu.com)), a nice and classical backpackers hostel.

Aguas Calientes: We birded along the railroad track and along the access road to Machu Picchu. To my surprise, the endemic Green-and-white Hummingbird was easily seen in Aguas Calientes town. Hotel: We stayed at a good, central and calm place I can't remember the name of.

Manu road: We were lucky with the road condition. Several landslides happened before we arrived and on our day of arrival a truck was stuck for a whole day in one landslide. Luckily, they got it out in the evening shortly after we got there. On the way back, we were slowed down a little bit by the retrieval of a truck that has fallen down the valley. The famous Cock-of-the-Rock lek has been moving to different sites over the last years and its size has been decreasing, currently holding 4-5 courting males. It is still next to the road and the lek site was protected by a plastic wall at the time of our visit. Hotels: Cock-of-the-Rock (COR) lodge ([www.inkanatura.com/de/manu-tours-and-lodges/cock-of-the-rock](http://www.inkanatura.com/de/manu-tours-and-lodges/cock-of-the-rock)), really excellent and luxurious lodge with excellent food and very nice staff. Wayqecha Biological Station: To our surprise an even more luxurious lodge than at the COR lodge! Also great food and very nice staff.

Tambopata: Hotel: Posadas Amazonas ([www.perunature.com/posada-amazonas.html](http://www.perunature.com/posada-amazonas.html)), a great, very luxurious lodge with great food and staff, but unfortunately very general-touristy and not really accommodated to birder's needs (i.e. small groups, slow forest walks, independent walking in the forest, specialized bird guides). Everything is organized around your guide and „group“ of around 8 people. There's a predefined group schedule with few room for individual adaptation. Upon request,

the manager made some extra program possible on day 3, when no early morning activity was scheduled, when I went to the canopy tower with our guide Jair. Furthermore, one afternoon on day 2, Jair went birding with me, while the rest of the group visited the shaman with another guide. After meeting the freelance Dutch artist and birdwatcher Michael who has spent some more time there, we did another early morning trip to the forest on our last morning. Jair did a great job in guiding the whole group and was also very motivated for some extra birding activity, also to learn more on the birds at the site.

Puno: Hotels: Casa Panqarani ([www.casapanqarani.com](http://www.casapanqarani.com)), a really, really amazing homestay run by a super friendly couple, where we were served some of the best food we had in Peru – top recommendation in town. We stayed a second night at the Colon Inn ([www.coloninn.com](http://www.coloninn.com)), a good, reasonably priced and central hotel.

Lake Titicaca: Uros Khantati ([www.uroskhantati.com](http://www.uroskhantati.com)), a very nice place to stay, fully run by the family of Cristina Suaña Coila, who is also an important spokeswoman of rural tourism in the altiplano region. We learnt a lot both on the life of the Uros community and about the development and sustainability of rural tourism in the region. Christina's son Abraham did a birding boat tour with me and knew the birdlife very well.

### ***Photos***

Some photos of our trip can be found in a flickr album to be found under the following link: [www.flickr.com/photos/marquesdavid/sets/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/marquesdavid/sets/)

### ***Sound recordings***

I recorded only a few birds in Tambopata, which can be heard on [www.xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org) under the accessions XC211283 and XC211284-XC211290.

### ***Commented species list***

Below, you can find a day-by-day species list with some additional comments. Abbreviations: 1+ = at least 1 seen, but more present; x = species recorded but number not estimated; H = species heard only; LHC: Laguna Huaypo-Chacan; MP: Machu Picchu; AC: Aguas Calientes; COR: Cock-of-the-Rock lodge; AL: Amazonia lodge; WQ: Wayqecha Biological Station; PA: Posadas Amazonas lodge; LT: Lake Titicaca; SL: Sillustani.















(Black-capped) Squirrel Monkey	Saimiri boliviensis											4	4							PA forests, also just outside lodge.
Brown / Dusky Titi	Callicebus brunneus										X	X	X	X						PA forests, also just outside lodge.
(Purus) Red Howler	Alouatta puruensis										X	X	X	X						Most common monkey at PA forest.
Northern Viscacha	Lagidium peruanum				1															MP ruins.
Common Agouti	Dasyprocta sp.											X	X	X						Common around PA.
Southern Amazon Red Squirrel	Sciurus spadiceus											1	2							PA forest.
Bolivian Squirrel	Sciurus ignitus					1	1													COR feeder.
European Hare	Lepus europaeus																		1	SL, invasive species.
Tayra	Eira barbara					1							1							COR feeder and one at PA forest.
<b>OTHERS</b>																				
Spectacled Caiman	Caiman crocodiles												1							PA night walk in the pond just outside the PA.