



Peru trip report

12th – 23rd June, 2008

Guide – Charles Hesse

Participants – Barbara & Jim L.



Itinerary

12th June – Arrive Lima.

13th June – Birding en route to Paracas. Pucusana & Puerto Viejo wetlands.

14th June – Islas Ballestas boat trip and birding Paracas area.

15th June – Birding en route to Lima. Fly Lima – Arequipa.

16th June – Birding to Laguna Salinas.

17th June – Birding en route to Puno. Patapampa & Lagunillas.

- 18th June – Boat trips on lake Titicaca. Birding around the lake.
 19th June – Fly Juliaca – Cuzco. Sight-seeing.
 20th June – Birding at Peñas. Train to Aguas Calientes. Birding in hotel gardens.
 21st June – Visit Machu Picchu. Birding in hotel gardens. Train to Ollantaytambo. Drive to Yucay.
 22nd June – Birding Laguna Huacarpay. Drive to back to Cuzco.
 23rd June – Depart for Manu.

13th June – Birding to Paracas. Pucusana & Puerto Viejo wetlands.

Our driver picked us up at the hotel after breakfast and our first stop was the beach near Miraflores. Here we saw many seabirds including **Peruvian Pelican**, **Peruvian Booby**, **Neotropic Cormorant**, **Kelp**, **Gray-hooded**, **Gray & Belcher's Gulls**. We drove down the Panamerican highway south and stopped again briefly to scan some fields for dotterels and thick-knees but all we saw were some **Groove-billed Anis**.

Next we turned off the highway to Pucusana. Before we reached this little fishing port we walked around some dry scrub and saw **Croaking Ground-Dove**, **West Peruvian Dove**, **Amazilia Hummingbird**, **Vermilion Flycatcher**, **Short-tailed Field-Tyrant**, **Blue-and-white Swallow** and **Long-tailed Mockingbird**. We drove through the town and up towards the sea cliffs which gave a majestic view over the sea. We saw **Humboldt Penguins** porpoising out of the water whilst pursued by many **Inca Terns**, a **Red-legged Cormorant** feeding at the base of the cliffs and a pair of endemic **Surf Cinclodes** preening themselves nearby.

After a nice seafood lunch, we continued down the Panamericana. The road drew close to the sea and we saw literally tens of thousands of birds feeding just off the beach. We pulled off the road and went closer to observe this amazing spectacle. The majority of the birds were **Guanay Cormorants** and we estimated there were at least 50,000. Possibly many more. There were also thousands of **Inca Terns** as well as boobies, pelicans and gulls. We also saw a few **Snowy Egrets**, **American Oystercatcher** and **Surf Cinclodes** on the beach and rocks.

Our last stop was at the Puerto Viejo wetlands. A former Duck-hunting area. We walked from the car park and past some nice reeds with **Wren-like Rushbird**, the stunning **Many-colored Rush-Tyrant** and **Grassland Yellow-Finch**. At the lake itself we saw **White-cheeked Pintail**, **Cinnamon Teal**, **Great Egret**, **Little Blue Heron**, **Common Moorhen**, **Andean Coot**, **Killdeer**, **Snowy Plover**, **Black-necked Stilt**, **Whimbrel** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**. We were surprised to see so many northern shorebirds still around.

After this, we drove directly to Paracas as it was getting late and we checked in to the Hotel El Mirador after a long but productive day.



14th June – Islas Ballestas boat trip and birding Paracas area.

We started the day with a short walk down to the coast to look at some shore birds such as **American Oystercatcher, Black-bellied Plover, Killdeer, Snowy Plover, Greater Yellowlegs and Ruddy Turnstone.**

We went back for breakfast and then set off on a 2-hour boat tour around the Ballestas island where we saw **Sooty Shearwater, Peruvian Pelican, Peruvian Booby, Neotropic, Guanay & Red-legged Cormorants, Inca Tern** plus great views of **Humboldt's Penguins** but just a few sea lions.

Before lunch we checked some abandoned fields towards the highway and found **Eared Dove, West Peruvian Dove, Burrowing Owl, Coastal Miner, Vermilion Flycatcher and Short-tailed Field-Tyrant.** The real prize though was a small group of **Tawny-throated Dotterels.** Despite extensive searching, we couldn't find the Peruvian Thick-knee so we went to check out some remnant dry forest patches on the highway. After some running up and down on the dunes I finally found a patch with a pair of rare **Slender-billed Finches,** but these birds proved too elusive to photograph.

In the afternoon we drove to the Paracas Peninsular where we found **Chilean Flamingo, Blackish Oystercatcher, Gray-hooded, Gray, Belcher's & Kelp Gulls, Elegant & Peruvian Terns** and hundreds of **Black Skimmers.**

As the **Peruvian Thick-knee** is nocturnal, I decided that we should try again at dusk. After more walking and also interviewing some locals, we finally gave up, only to flush 3 birds from the side of the road on the way back. We had no flashlight but got good views by positioning the car to spotlight the birds.

15th June – Birding en route to Lima. Fly Lima – Arequipa.

We set off after breakfast and checked the coastal marshes at San Andres and Pisco and saw many birds including **Cinnamon Teal, Ruddy Duck, White-tufted & Pied-billed Grebes, Striated Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Puna Ibis, Cinereous Harrier, Whimbrel, Andean Coot, Plumbeous Rail, Wren-like Rushbird and Many-colored Rush-Tyrant.**

On the way back we also checked the pier at Cerro Azul and saw some dolphins in the distance as well as more great views (and photos) of **Inca Terns** and many other sea birds.

We drove back to Lima in time to catch our flight to Arequipa in the south of the country. At 2,300m it gave us a chance to begin to acclimate a little for the next few days of high elevation birding.

16th June – Birding to Laguna Salinas.



We started our birding in the south of Peru with a day trip to Laguna Salinas, a high elevation salt lake just 2 hours drive from Arequipa. First we drove to the town of Chiguata and birded some scrub above town with **Black-winged & Croaking Ground-Doves, Creamy-breasted Canastero, Spot-billed Ground-Tyrant, Blue-and-white Swallow, Chiguanco Thrush, Mourning, Ash-breasted, Band-tailed Sierra-Finch, Band-tailed Seedeater, Greenish Yellow-Finch** and **Hooded Siskin**.

We carried on up the winding road and took several birding stops along the way, adding **Variable Hawk, Mountain Caracara, Bare-faced Ground-Dove, Giant Hummingbird, White-throated, Plain-breasted & Straight-billed Earthcreepers, Bar-winged Cinclodes, Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail, Canyon & Cordilleran Canastero, Rufous-naped Ground-Tyrant, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Cinereous & Tamarugo Conebills** and **Peruvian Sierra-Finch**.

We finally arrived at the lake to find the water level right down and the thousands of individuals of the 3 species of flamingos we had hoped to see, reduced to 1 single **Chilean Flamingo**. There were still many excellent birds on the remaining water but we had to walk a fair distance to the water's edge which was not easy at this elevation.

Finally we saw **Andean Goose, Speckled Teal, Crested Duck, Puna Ibis, Andean Lapwing, Puna Plover, Andean Avocet, Puna Snipe, Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, Andean Gull, Burrowing Owl, Common Miner, White-fronted, Ochre-naped & Puna Ground-Tyrants, Andean Negrito** and **Bright-rumped Yellow-Finch**.

We made it back to the car very light headed and set off on the drive back. We all had headaches and Barbara also got very car sick on the way back. We had seen many excellent birds but had paid the price. We had a well deserved rest once we got back to the hotel.

17th June – Birding en route to Puno. Patapampa & Lagunillas.

We left Arequipa and made our way up the main highway towards Puno. On the way up we stopped to look at a herd of Vicuñas. We took a side road up towards the famous Colca Cañon. The road passed by several lakes and wetlands which were full of great birds in good light for photography. Here we saw **Andean Goose, Speckled & Puna Teal, Crested Duck, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Puna Ibis, Giant Coot, Andean Gull, Black-winged Ground-Dove, Common Miner, Bar-winged & White-winged Cinclodes, Canyon Canastero, Andean Negrito, Puna & Rufous-naped Ground-Tyrant, Peruvian Sierra-Finch, Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch**.

We carried on along the road, climbing higher and higher to a place called Patapampa. We stopped just before the highest point in the road (4900m) to search a cushion plant



bog for the enigmatic Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. After searching extensively, we failed to find it but we did see some good birds like: **Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Ochre-naped & White-fronted Ground-Tyrants** and a pair of **White-winged Diuca-Finches**.

The slightest excursion at this altitude left you out of breath and with a headache, so we gave up on the star bird and continued our trip to Puno. On the way back down we were lucky enough to get close up views of a pair of **Mountain Caracaras** just a few metres away from the car.

Our last stop was at a place called Lagunillas. A huge freshwater lake full of birds. The highway passed over a bridge through the lake and we stopped to look for new birds. There were many of the same birds we had seen in the morning, but we also added **Ruddy Duck, Silvery Grebe, Chilean Flamingo, Neotropic Cormorant, Cinereous Harrier, Common Moorhen, Andean Coot, Andean Lapwing, Puna Plover, Andean Avocet, Andean Flicker** and **Andean Swallow**. By the time we arrived in Puno, it was dark and it was nice to relax in the luxurious Hotel Sonesta Posada del Inca on the banks of the huge Lake Titicaca.

18th June – Boat trips on lake Titicaca.

In the morning we spent some time in the lakeside garden of the hotel and saw **Ruddy Duck, Giant Coot, Andean Lapwing, Spot-winged Pigeon** and **Eared Dove**. We took a boat trip from the pier which took us to some interesting floating islands in the lake. The friendly ladies greeted us in Aymara and we learnt a little about their way of life and bought a few handicrafts from them.

On the way we saw **Yellow-billed Pintail, Puna, Speckled & Cinnamon Teals, White-tufted Grebe, Common Moorhen, Andean Coot, Andean Gull, Wren-like Rushbird, Many-colored Rush-Tyrant,** and **Yellow-winged Blackbird** but unfortunately not our main target here. An endemic to the lake, the Titicaca Grebe. After being taken back to the hotel, we were met by our driver and we took a drive, scanning along the edge of the lake. I soon spotted a pair of grebes and on closer inspection we saw they were **Titicaca Grebes**. Unfortunately they were a little far away to get a good photo, so we found a local fisherman who agreed to take us closer in a small boat. As we got closer to them they started swimming away, but we still got close enough to take some reasonable photos. The fisherman said that they sometimes swim into his fishing nets and drown which is one of the reasons why the species is endangered.

Next we drove to the ruins of Sillustani by a small lake nearby called Lago Umayo. On the way we saw a distant flock of flamingos but on closer inspection, they were all Chilean. Lago Umayo had most of the same water birds we had seen at Titicaca but it also had some scrub and puna habitat where we saw some interesting species like **Bare-**



facéd & Black-winged Ground-Doves, Burrowing Owl, Andean Flicker, Slender-billed Miner, Cordilleran Canastero, Cinereous Ground-Tyrant, Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch and Bright-rumped Yellow-Finch.

Our driver dropped us back at the hotel and we said a final goodbye before he left. We had a little time left for birding and took a short walk along the lake shore and saw **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, **Snowy Egret**, **Puna Ibis**, **Plumbeous Rail**, **White-winged Cinclodes**, **Andean Negrito**, **Rufous-naped Ground-Tyrant**, **Andean Swallow**, **Chiguanco Thrush**, **Peruvian & Mourning Sierra-Finches**.

19th June – Fly Juliaca – Cuzco. Sight-seeing.

We left early for our flight from Juliaca to Cuzco and at the other end were taken to the Hotel Apus. The rest of the day we enjoyed many of the non-birding sights that Cuzco has to offer, such as the Qoricancha Temple and the handicraft market.

20th June – Birding at Peñas. Train to Aguas Calientes. Birding in hotel gardens.

We had the morning to bird before our train left for Machu Picchu. We drove to the town of Ollantaytambo seeing **Variable Hawk** and **Mountain Caracara** on the way. The sacred valley was all agricultural and had no interesting habitat to speak of, so we passed Ollantaytambo and headed up to the crumbling pre-Inca ruins at Peñas.

Lower down on the road we saw some common species such as **Sparkling Violetear**, **Black-backed Grosbeak** and **Hooded Siskin** and higher up we were lucky enough to see a group of **Andean Tinamou**s crossing the road. Around the ruins we saw **Spot-winged Pigeon**, **Tyrian Metaltail**, the endemics **White-tufted Sunbeam** and **Creamy-crested Spinetail**, **D'Orbigny's Chat-Tyrant**, **Red-crested Cotinga**, **Brown-bellied Swallow**, **Cinereous Conebill**, **Rusty & Black-throated Flowerpiercers**. We drove back down to Ollantaytambo where we had lunch and saw **Blue-and-yellow Tanager** and **Green-tailed Trainbearer**. The latter was scared off by the waiter before Jim had a chance to take a photo.

After lunch, we walked down to the train station and finally boarded our train which we were surprised to see was completely empty which meant we got the best views at the front. The train went alongside a beautiful clear river where we saw many **Torrent Ducks**. When we arrived in Aguas Calientes we walked 5 minutes to the wonderful Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel. After our orientation we enjoyed a walk in the beautiful gardens where we saw many birds, including: **Andean Guan**, **Roadside Hawk**, **White-tipped Dove**, the endemic **Green-and-white Hummingbird**, **Chestnut-breasted Coronet**, **Long-tailed Sylph**, **Booted Racket-tail**, the beautiful **Highland**



Motmot, Sclater's Tyrannulet, Social Flycatcher, a fleeting glimpse of **Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Blue-gray** and **Blue-necked Tanagers, Slate-throated & Spectacled Redstarts, Russet-crowned Warbler, Dusky-green Oropendola** and **Thick-billed Euphonia**.

In the evening we enjoyed a delicious meal followed by a relaxing massage before retiring to our luxurious rooms.

21st June – Visit Machu Picchu. Birding in hotel gardens. Train to Ollantaytambo. Drive to Yucay.

We were up very early to try and get to the ruins before sunrise and before all the crowds arrived. After breakfast we went down to get the bus and were horrified to see a very long line of people waiting. More buses arrived to shuttle people up and we didn't have to wait as long as we had feared. Once at the ruins we started hiking up to some nice birding trails. The path passed by some forest where we had great views of the endemic **Inca Wren**. The area around the ruins is probably the best place to see this well named species. The birding trails were a little steep and we decided to go no further. We only caught a fleeting glimpse of a **Moustached Flowerpiercer** as it flew away.

We continued walking around the marvelous ruins and even saw some **Mitred Parakeets** flying down in the valley. Sore legs and an obnoxious guard persuaded us that we had seen enough and we went back down to our hotel to spend some more time in the wonderful gardens. We saw many of the same species as yesterday but added **Green & Sparkling Violet-ears, White-bellied Woodstar, Plumbeous-crowned & Ashy-headed Tyrannulets, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Silver-backed, Hepatic and Saffron-crowned Tanagers, Black-backed Grosbeak** and **Tropical Parula**.

After a nice but rather slow lunch, we rushed for our train back to Ollantaytambo. This time it was full and we met some interesting people sat next to us. We were also treated to a fashion show of Alpaca knitwear before arriving. Our driver Max was waiting for us and took us the short distance to our next hotel. We arrived in Yucay and had a look around the gardens and saw more of the endemic **Green-and-white Hummingbirds** as well as many other common species. The hotel had a small handicraft market where we enjoyed chatting to the local people and bargaining for a good price.

22nd June – Laguna Huacarpay. Drive to Cuzco.

We started our birding with a walk up a dry canyon looking for some dry habitat birds. The habitat looked excellent but had surprising few birds. We caught glimpses of **Rusty-fronted Canastero** and **Band-tailed Seedeater** but got much better views and some nice photos of **White-browed Chat-Tyrant**. Next we started driving round the



lake and saw many water and reed-bed birds like: **White-tufted Grebe**, **Yellow-billed Pintail**, **Puna**, **Speckled & Cinnamon Teal**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Puna Ibis**, **Plumbeous Rail**, **Common Moorhen**, **Andean Coot**, **Andean Lapwing**, **Andean Gull**, **Wren-like Rushbird** and **Yellow-winged Blackbird**. In the dry scrub around the lake we saw **Spot-winged Pigeon**, **Eared Dove**, **Bare-faced Ground-Dove**, **Green Violet-ear** and much better views of the endemic **Rusty-fronted Canastero**.

For lunch we relaxed at a local restaurant with a nice garden where we saw **Giant Hummingbird**, **Green-tailed Trainbearer**, **White-crested Elaenia**, **Chiguanco Thrush**, **Blue-and-yellow Tanager**, **Cinereous Conebill**, **Golden-billed Saltator** and **Hooded Siskin**.

I had seen the stunning endemic Bearded Mountaineer in these gardens on a previous trip but it seemed that it's favourite flowers were not in bloom at the moment. After this we had 1 final stop on the other side of the highway where we saw the rare **Streak-fronted Thornbird** to finish this section of the trip. We went back to Cuzco and the next day Barbara and Jim set off on their adventure to Manu.

We had seen a total of 176 species but it was certainly quality and not quantity that mattered.



Trip list

Andean Tinamou	<i>Nothoprocta pentlandii</i>								O			
Andean Goose	<i>Chloephaga melanoptera</i>			S	P							
Yellow-billed Pintail	<i>Anas georgica</i>					T						H
Puna Teal	<i>Anas puna</i>				P	T	U					H
White-cheeked Pintail	<i>Anas bahamensis</i>	L										
Speckled Teal	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>			S	P	T	U					H
Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>	L	B			T	U					H
Crested Duck	<i>Lophonetta specularioides</i>			S	P							
Torrent Duck	<i>Merganetta armata</i>											
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>		B		P	T	U					H
Andean Guan	<i>Penelope montagnii</i>								A			
Titicaca Grebe	<i>Rollandia microptera</i>					T						
White-tufted Grebe	<i>Rollandia rolland</i>		B			T						H
Silvery Grebe	<i>Podiceps occipitalis</i>				P							
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>		B									
Chilean Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus chilensis</i>		B	S	P	T						
Humboldt Penguin	<i>Spheniscus humboldti</i>	L										
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>		B									
Peruvian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus thagus</i>	L	B									
Peruvian Booby	<i>Sula variegata</i>	L	B									
Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>	L	B		P							
Guanay Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax bougainvillii</i>	L	B									
Red-legged Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax gaimardi</i>	L	B									
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	L	B									
Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	L	B									
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	L	B			T						
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	L	B									H
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>		B									
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		B		P	T	U					
Puna Ibis	<i>Plegadis ridgwayi</i>		B	S	P	T	U			Y		H

Black-throated Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa brunneiventris</i>							O				
Peruvian Sierra-Finch	<i>Phrygilus punensis</i>			S	P	T						
Mourning Sierra-Finch	<i>Phrygilus fruticeti</i>			S		T						
Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch	<i>Phrygilus plebejus</i>			S	P		U					
Band-tailed Sierra-Finch	<i>Phrygilus alaudinus</i>			S								
White-winged Diuca-Finch	<i>Diuca speculifera</i>				P							
Band-tailed Seedeater	<i>Catamenia analis</i>			S				O	A	Y	H	
Slender-billed Finch	<i>Xenospingus concolor</i>		B									
Greenish Yellow-Finch	<i>Sicalis olivascens</i>			S								
Grassland Yellow-Finch	<i>Sicalis luteola</i>	L										
Bright-rumped Yellow-Finch	<i>Sicalis uropygialis</i>			S		T	U					
Yellow-bellied Seedeater	<i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>								A			
Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>		B	S	P	T	U	O	A	Y	H	
Black-backed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus aureoventris</i>							O	A			
Golden-billed Saltator	<i>Saltator aurantiirostris</i>											H
Tropical Parula	<i>Parula pitayumi</i>								A			
Slate-throated Redstart	<i>Myioborus miniatus</i>								A			
Spectacled Redstart	<i>Myioborus melanocephalus</i>								A			
Russet-crowned Warbler	<i>Basileuterus coronatus</i>								A			
Dusky-green Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius atrovirens</i>								A			
Yellow-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelasticus thilius</i>					T						H
Hooded Siskin	<i>Carduelis magellanica</i>			S				O				H
Thick-billed Euphonia	<i>Euphonia lanirostris</i>								A			
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	L	B									

Total 178sp including 2sp only heard.

Key:

L – Lima-Pisco Highway

S – Laguna Salinas

T – Puno & Lago Titicaca area

O – Ollantaytambo & Peñas

Y – Yucay, Sacred valley & Cusco area

h – Heard only

B – Islas Ballestas & Paracas area

P – Patapampa & Lagunillas

U – Lago Umayo

A – Aguas Calientes & Machu Picchu

H – Laguna Huacarpay

bold – Peruvian endemic