

## PERU BIRDING TOUR: Northern Birding Route

(January 2014)

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**OBJECTIVE:** Explore the Northern Peru Birding route from Tarapoto to Chiclayo with a special focus on hummingbirds and endemic species. A two day extension to Santa Eulalia (north-east of Lima) was added at the end of the tour.

**LOGISTICS:** For most of our trip, we used a full time driver Jorge, the owner of Kawsay Tours based in Tarapoto (Hyundai mini-van). He was an exceptional driver – safe, courteous, fun to be around, and also helped arrange some of the logistics for the trip. The road (Hwy 5N) from Tarapoto to Chiclayo is now paved, and we had no problems using the mini-van. Only the access road to Chaparri was a problem where a 4x4 would have been preferable. For the two day trip to Santa Eulalia, we did rent a full-size 4x4 SUV from Budget at Lima airport, which proved to be a wise decision given the road conditions we encountered near the summit. We also used two domestic LAN flights: a) Lima - Tarapoto and b) Chiclayo - Lima. We were impressed with the efficiency of LAN airlines on its domestic routes. All our flights departed on time and there was no lost luggage. Perhaps most impressive was the judgement and prudence of the pilots for aborting a landing at Tarapoto at literally the last second due to very poor visibility and then having to return to Lima.

**WEATHER:** Our tour had been planned to coincide with the start of the "rainy" season. Although we only had one day of steady rain, heavy rains prior to our arrival made the trails too muddy and slippery at Waqanki and Pomacochas/San Lorenzo. We had mostly cloudy conditions with intermittent light rain showers. Some mornings started with partly cloudy skies, and then clouds developed as the day progressed, especially at higher elevations on the eastern Andes. At Santa Eulalia we had everything from bright sunny skies in the early morning, to snow and high winds at the highest elevations by mid-afternoon. It just proved yet again how unpredictable the weather can be in the Andes. But overall, the weather did not seriously restrict our birding objectives for the trip.

**HEALTH:** Based on CDC recommendations we elected to take anti-malaria prophylaxis while in San Martin (Tarapoto to Abra Patricia). As it turned out, despite the recent rains, there were very few if any mosquitoes. At other sites we wore protective clothing and used DEET spray as needed. Most annoying were the swarms of black sand flies at Chaparri. We drank bottled water (although there was filtered/purified water at Kentitambo and Chaparri) and no one encountered any gastro-intestinal problems during the trip.

### KEY BIRDING SITES:

**Tarapoto Tunnel** (6° 24' 58"S, 76° 18' 57"W, 785m) –About 20km from Tarapoto along Hwy 29 towards Yurimaguas, there are several remaining and protected patches of forest making for excellent road-side birding. Paradise and Swallow Tanagers were easily seen, but the **Dotted Tanager** proved an elusive target. Koepcke's Hermit can now be seen coming to feeders at the Aconabikh Centre.

**Waqanki Reserve** (6° 4' 31"S, 76° 58' 38"W, 995m) – is a private family-run reserve in the Mayo Valley on the outskirts of Moyobamba which is also known Quebrada Mishquiyacu. There is an extensive trail system, an observation tower, several sites with hummingbird feeders and an orchid garden. Of the over 25 hummingbird species recorded here, the star is the Rufous-crested Coquette. Other important target birds are the Black-bellied (Huallaga) Tanager, Fiery-throated Fruit-eater and Fiery-capped Manakin. There are now two buildings with about 12 rooms that are well-sized, clean and more than adequate. All our meals were excellent. The cost for lodging with meals was only about \$60-70US per person - - in hind sight we should have stayed another day.

**Afluente and Abra Patricia** – most birding occurs 1-2km along the main road just above the town of Afluente on either side of the Vulcanizadora (tire shop) at Km389 (5° 40' 30"S, 77° 42' 14"W, 1425m). At the right time of year, the area is known for its mega-flocks of tanagers, flycatchers, warblers, barbets, parrots, aracaris and toucannets. Based on our experience, January is a not an optimal time of year to visit.

**Owlet Lodge** (5° 41' 45"S, 77° 48' 41"W, 2310m)– is a lodge newly built by ECOAN with an extensive trail system and several feeder sites. The key attraction here is the Long-Whiskered Owlet which requires a lot of luck and a one hour hike up and down a steep trail. At the feeders, one can reliably see the otherwise rare Emerald-bellied Puffleg, while nearby at the Garcia Trail/Sunangel Ridge is where one hopes to find the rare **Royal Sunangel**. Of the over twenty recorded tanagers, the **Yellow-scarfed Tanager** is the most striking. Accommodations are set up in three identical cabins each with a single BR, double BR, shared common area and shared washroom/shower. The meals served in the main lodge/restaurant were well prepared and tasty. However at \$135US per person per night, some might consider it slightly over-priced by Peruvian standards.

**Huembo Centre** (5° 51' 23"S, 77° 59' 3"W, 2075m)– is located on a steep hillside in a habitat favoured by the Marvellous Spatuletail and is managed by Santos Montenegro who has personally help direct the conservation of this remarkable species in the Pomacochas region. The spatuletails are usually seen most reliably in the early morning. Up to eight other hummingbird species can be seen at the forest feeders. The Centre is a boon for birders, as in the past one would often have to sit for hours at hillside flowers hoping to see a spatuletail. However the dark setting from overhanging trees and dense bushes make photography a nightmare. There are no accommodations onsite, and for most birders a 2-3 hour visit would suffice.

**Kentitambo** (5° 43' 28"S, 77° 47' 51"W, 2385m)– without a doubt, the setting, facilities, staff and food at Kentitambo were 5-star and the highlight of our tour. The lodge situated across from the Leymebamba museum consists of two rooms/suites each with two beds which would prohibit larger groups from staying here. The entire hillside has been reforested with native tree species and extensive flower gardens. All meals were expertly prepared from produce grown locally, even the meat and herbs for after dinner tea. There are hummingbird feeders at numerous sites and a small network of trails on the property. Although the spatuletail does visit the forest feeders depending on the season, the Rainbow Starfrontlet was our favourite bird. The lodge is close to Abra Barros Negro and the mummy museum is an excellent portrayal of Chachapoyan culture. Definitely worth a visit.

**Chaparri Reserve** (6° 32' 20"S, 79° 28' 32"W, 30m)– can perhaps best described as a site for hard-core birders. The lodge is very remote unless one flies directly into Chiclayo, and even then it is still a two hour drive with the last hour over rugged rocky terrain requiring a 4x4 SUV. Although situated in a scenic but hot desert-like setting, the rooms lack any electrical power which seriously limits use of computers, recharging cameras, ...We had the most problem with bugs/insects here. It was also exceedingly difficult to book our stay – rates kept changing, incorrect taxes (18% VAT) were applied while legitimate published discounts (10% ABA) were denied. There are no managerial staff onsite at the lodge. The local guides who actually work at the lodge are to be applauded for their enthusiasm and conservation efforts. The birding at the lodge and in nearby Casupe forest was however exceptional for Tumbesian species.

**Santa Eulalia Canyon** –is best seen as a full two day trip out of Lima. The canyon is about 40km north-east of Lima. To complete the full 80-100km loop on the old road takes at least a full day. Enroute there were no nearby stops for food or overnight accommodations except at the small village of Huachopampa. Much of the trip was above 3000-3500m which made altitude sickness a serious issue. The scenery was spectacular, but the road side cliffs can be deadly. Endemic species which make the trip worthwhile include **Peruvian Sheartail, Bronze-tailed Comet, Black-breasted Hillstar, Olivaceous Thornbill, Rufous-breasted Warbling-Finch, Great Inca-Finch, Black-necked Woodpecker, Striated Earthcreeper, Rusty-crowned Tit-Spinetail, Canyon Canastero and Rusty-bellied Brush-Finch**. Best to let someone else do the driving

**PHOTOGRAPHS:** galleries of photos from the trip can be found on the last page of the report

### **ITINERARY:**

- January 3** - 4PM flight on American Airlines from Miami to Lima. Overnight at Ramada hotel by the airport.  
**January 4** - Flights from Lima to Tarapoto .Overnight at Toucan Suites in Tarapoto..  
**January 5** -Birding near the Tarapoto tunnel and drive to Moyobamba. Overnight at Waqanki Reserve.  
**January 6** - Full day birding at Waquanki. Overnight at Waqanki Reserve.  
**January 7** - Drive to Abra Patricia with several birding stops enroute. Overnight at Owllet Lodge.  
**January 8** - Full day birding around Abra Patricia.Overnight at Owllet Lodge  
**January 9** - Birding around Pomacochas, and visit to Huembo Centre. Overnight at hostel in Pomacochas.  
**January 10** - Return visit to Huembo Centre, mid-drive drive to Leymebamba. Overnight at Kentitambo  
**January 11** -Birding at Barro Negro. Overnight at Kentitambo  
**January 12** - Local market at Yerbabuena. Afternoon visit to museum. Overnight at Kentitambo  
**January 13** - All day drive from Leymebamba to Balsas to Celedin. Overnight Imperial Hotel in Celedin  
**January 14** - Morning at Cruz Conga. Drive to Cajamarca. Afternoon at Rio Chontas. Overnight in Chiclayo  
**January 15** - Morning at Pomac Forest. Drive to ?? .Afternoon at Chaparri. Overnight at Chaparri lodge.  
**January 16** - Morning at Chaparri. Afternoon private garden near ?? .Overnight at Chaparri lodge.  
**January 17** - Morning at Casupe Forest. Drive to Chiclayo. 6pm flight to Lima. Overnight in Chicosa  
**January 18** - Full drive old road from Santa Eulalia to Ticlio bogs. Overnight in Chicosa  
**January 19** – Morning around Santa Eulalia. Afternoon drive to Lima airport. 23:00PM AA flight to Miami

### **DAILY ACTIVITY REPORTS**

(**Note:** Birds in **bold** are Peruvian endemics or near-endemics)

Transit between the lodges was often accompanied by unscheduled road side birding stops which are not always included in the following reports.

#### **January 4**

Our overnight stay at the Ramada Inn at the airport, facilitated check in for the 7AM LAN flight to Tarapoto. After an on-time departure in clear skies, heavy rains at Tarapoto made it impossible to see the runway, and the landing had to be aborted at the last minute. After circling for another 15-20 minutes, the pilot decided to return to Lima. The flight was rescheduled for 1:30PM and we did eventually land safely at Tarapoto around 3PM. After checking in at our hotel (Tucan Suites), we drove the the Tarapoto tunnel where fog and light rain limited birding. We had a quick dinner at the hotel and hoped tomorrow would bring us better luck.

#### **January 5**

An early 6AM start and a ½ hour drive soon had us birding the area near the Tarapoto tunnel. At our first stop we saw Blue-black Seedeater and Black-faced Warbler. Soon we encountered several mixed flocks which included Blue-grey (with a white wing bar), Palm, Yellow-backed, Olive, and Yellow-crested Tanagers. A pair of Swallow Tanagers and at least 5-6 Paradise Tanagers were also seen. With patience we thought we'd finally found a **Dotted Tanager**, but subsequent closer examination of actual photos showed it was more likely a Yellow-bellied Tanager. A pair of Curl-crested Aracaris flew by. By 9AM we stopped for a box-breakfast at the Ahuashiyacu waterfalls, where we saw small flocks of Cobalt-winged and Rose-faced Parakeets feeding in nearby tall trees. Numerous Yellow-rumped Caciques were building nests in a group of palm trees. A Gilded Barbet was also seen. Beyond the tunnel, we stopped and spent the rest of the morning at the new Koepcke's Hermit Centre. At least 10 species of hummingbirds were seen at the feeders near the observation tower : Great-billed Hermit, Koepcke's Hermit, Grey-breasted Sabrewing, Gould's Jewelfront, Golden-tailed Sapphire ... Bob and Boris searched the trail for a Fiery-capped Manakin which they'd heard, without success. After a late lunch at the hotel, we left Tarapoto by 3PM for Moyobamba. We stopped around 5PM at the Quiscarrumi bridge, near KM 515 (6°8'49"S, 76°50'29"W) where we saw the Oilbirds and hundreds of noisy White-lored Parakeets. It had rained heavily all day in the area, and when we arrived at dusk at Waqanki, our van briefly got stuck in the mud. We eventually made it to the lodge, where despite a slight mix-up in our reservations we still enjoyed a nice dinner (salad, fried chicken and fresh mango dessert).

## January 6

After a hearty 6:30AM breakfast (fried eggs, fresh fruit, toast, cheese and coffee) we headed up to the observation tower. The heavy rains had made the steeper sections on the main trails too muddy and slippery. The feeders were quite active and we soon saw both male and female Rufous-crested Coquettes, Grey-breasted Sabrewing, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Sapphire-spangled Emeralds, White-chinned Sapphire, Forked-tailed Woodnymphs, 3 species of hermits (Great-billed, Black-throated and Reddish), White-necked Jacobin, Black-throated Mangos (male and female), Long-billed Starthroat, Sparkling and Brown Violetears. Blue-tailed Emerald and Violet-headed Hummingbirds were seen in the verbena bushes. We did not see the Buff-tailed Sicklebill which is only found on the trails, but requires a 2-3 hour hike. Lunch was a delicious beet and carrot salad, and fried tilapia with rice. In the afternoon I returned to the feeders for some multi-flash hummingbird photography, while Boris and Bob went on the lower trails and saw Long-tailed Tyrant, Lafresnaye's Piculet, and the endemic **Huallaga Tanager**. A Russet-crowned Crake was near the orchid garden. Dinner was a fresh vegetable soup, grilled chicken with potatoes and custard dessert.

## January 7

After another excellent breakfast, we departed by 7AM and drove northward. It was an easy drive on the paved roads thru mostly cattle ranches and rice fields. However the bright sunny skies and hot temperatures soon made birding difficult. We did hear and see another Russet-crowned Crake at one road side stop, but the bird never showed itself long enough for any photos. Because of recent safety concerns, we did not visit Morro de Calzada. We arrived at Afluyente by 10AM and stopped by the tire shop ( xxx ) . Despite its reputation for large mega-flocks, birding was extremely slow and the first birds we saw were migratory warblers (Canada and Blackburnian). We did find a nice pair of Versicolored Barbets. After an hour it started to rain lightly and we decided to move on.

While at Waqanki, we learnt of a new private reserve (Fundo Alto Nieva) near the Garcia trail which had recently set up some hummingbird feeders, which were now reportedly being visited by **Royal Sunangels**. There are no signs, just a trail leading from the main highway. It is a 10 minute hike to the main station which also serves as a camp site, and a further 10 minute walk thru the "white sand" forest to several hummingbird feeders. Here we did see at least six male and two female **Royal Sunangels**. In addition to several Bronzy Incas, a couple of female Booted Racket-tails and single male and female Violet-fronted Brilliants, there were also several Greenish Puffleg with entirely white bellies. Subsequent research confirmed that they represented the subspecies *H.a. cutucuensis* recently described by Schuchman in SE Ecuador (2004) for which no photos had yet been published.

Unfortunately it started to rain, and after a couple of hours we decided to move on and arrived at the Owllet Lodge by 3pm. At the main lodge, the feeders were completely covered with honey-bees keeping the hummingbirds away. After a bit of a cleanup , we did see Emerald-bellied Puffleg, Bronzy Inca, Long-tailed Sylph, Collared Inca, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, and Speckled Hummingbirds. We spent what was left of the afternoon taking perched photos when the rain intermittently let up. For dinner, there was a welcome Pisco Sour, a vegetable soup, and what else - fried chicken with spaghetti.

## January 8

It continued to rain all night , and we were told that it had rained every day for the past 2 weeks. Luckily the rain stopped by 7:30AM so we drove back down Hwy 5 towards Alto Neiva for several hours of roadside birding. Again there were very few flocks – Boris speculated that females had probably started nesting. Returning to the lodge around 10 AM, we did see some target species which included Black-throated and **Lulu's Tody-Tyrant**. Lunch was a beef, pepper and onion sauté served with rice or steak and French fries. In the afternoon Bob and Boris took the trail to the observation tower. Again activity was slow, but they did see Red-hooded and Grass-Green Tanagers, Streaked Tufted-cheek and a surprise Chestnut-crested Cotinga. Fog made viewing difficult. Before dinner they went looking for owls, but failed to see the **Long-whiskered Owllet**. A consolation prize was hearing an **Ochre-fronted Antpitta**. The hike down as dark descended wasn't too bad, but it was hard work climbing the wet trail on the return.

## January 9

Just before departing, Bob did see a **Yellow-scarfed Tanager** which he had missed yesterday. After about an hour's drive, we arrived at the Huembo Centre where we met Santos Montenegro. By 7:45AM, we were seated near the forest feeders watching for the **Marvelous Spatuletail**. It only took 15 minutes before a male appeared, but it quickly chased away by the Violetears. It would appear several more times at 15-20 minute intervals, however no females were seen. Sparkling and Green Violetears were the predominant species aggressively defending their territories. Other species seen at the feeders included Chestnut-breasted Coronet, White-bellied Hummingbird, Bronzy Inca, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Purple-throated Sunangel (one male), Andean Emerald, and female Little Woodstar. The male Little Woodstar would periodically visit a flowering tree. We also saw an Emerald Toucannet ... By mid-morning it started to rain and the spatuletail had disappeared, so we returned to Pomacochas. We visited the Puerto Pumas Hotel which has several large flower gardens where we saw Green-tailed Trainbearer (male), Purple-collared Woodstar (females), Sparkling Violetear and White-bellied Hummingbird. We had an excellent lunch (yucca salad and grilled trout) at a local restaurant El Puquio. Afterwards we visited the lake where we saw Plumbeous Rail, Subtropical Doradito, Peruvian Meadowlarks and heard Puna Snipe. By mid-afternoon we decided to drive to Pedro Ruiz and then turn northward hoping to find some endemic Marañon species. We stopped at about Km 278 and hiked up a steep trail to an overlook. Birding was again slow, but we did see Buff-bellied Tanager, Black-capped Sparrow, and the Marañon race of Tropical Gnatcatcher. We originally had plan to overnight at Gocta Falls, but instead returned to Pomacochas where we had dinner at El Puquio and stayed at a small local hostel, Hospedaje Las Brisas, with clean basic rooms and hot showers.

## January 10

We had hoped that if the weather cleared, we would try the San Lorenzo trail in the morning. Unfortunately, we awoke to another wet rainy day which again would make the trail too muddy and slippery. Instead we decided to return to the Huembo Centre. We saw the same hummingbirds, but this time did manage to get a few better photos of the **Marvellous Spatuletail**. By mid-morning it was time to leave, and we again drove to Pedro Ruiz, but this time turned southward along the Utcubamba canyon. The highway is now paved as far as Chachapoyas, after which it became a dirt road. We stopped at El Chillo hoping to see the screech owls, but were disappointed to find the property for sale, and that the tree where they usually roosted had been cut down. By mid-afternoon we arrived at Yerbabuena. Just beyond town near KM444 on an abandoned lot there was a large wild flower garden. Here we saw and photographed Sparkling Violetear, Little Woodstar (male and female), Purple-collared Woodstar (female), **Spot-throated Hummingbird** and White-bellied Hummingbird. After a couple of hours we drove on to Leymebamba and by dusk arrived at the lodge at Kentitambo. Without a doubt, the setting, facilities, staff and food at Kentitambo were 5-star and the best we stayed at. All produce are grown locally, even the herbs. Regrettably there are only two rooms/suites each with two beds which prohibits larger groups from staying here. The entire hillside has been reforested with native tree species and extensive flower gardens. Dinner was a quinoa salad, roast pork and sweet potatoes paired with a fine Argentinean malbec, and chocolate mousse for dessert. After dinner we spotlighted a pair of **Koepke's Screech-Owls** in the lodge garden.

## January 11

We had an early 5:30AM breakfast (fresh papaya and mangos, yogurt, toast, cheese, scrambled eggs and coffee) to allow us an early start towards Abra Barro Negro. We drove about an hour in fog and light rain to the summit, and then drove a it further down the east slope where the rains did stop. We managed to photograph several **Coppery Metalltail**, and did briefly see a **Coppery-naped Puffleg**. The most common species were Shining Sunbeam feeding on large white flowers. Other birds we saw included Andean Flicker, White-browed Thistle-tail, Mountain Caracara, the Leymebamba race of Blackish Tapaculo (perhaps soon to become *S. intermedius*) and Red-crested Cotinga. We returned to Kentitambo for lunch (pork ribs and a delicious corn, squash, potato and cheese stew). In the afternoon I stayed at the lodge and hummingbird feeders to photograph Rainbow Starfrontlet, White-bellied Woodstar, White-bellied Hummingbird, ... As the weather had cleared somewhat, Bob and Boris returned to Abra Barro Negro hoping for better luck and did manage to find a large flock with Smoky Bush-Tyrant, Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan, three species of Mountain Tanagers, Streaked

Tufted-cheek, Drab and White-bellied Hemispingus and **Rufous-eared Brush-Finch**. Dinner was potato soup, salad and pizza.

### January 12

We awoke to heavy rain and overcast skies. As it did not look likely that the weather would clear at the lodge, we drove back towards Yerbabuena where it is generally drier and luckily the rains did stop. On the way we stopped to photograph a colourful male Torrent Duck along the river. We spent a couple of hours at the flower garden, where we again saw the same species, but failed to find a male Purple-collared Woodstar for which we were hoping. Mid-morning we went into town for the weekly local market where farmers come from the surrounding mountains to sell their produce. The variety of goods and friendly, colorful people made for interesting photo opportunities. We returned to Kentitambo for lunch (chicken sandwiches with avocado on fresh home-made bread). In the afternoon several flocks passed the lodge which included Smoke-colored Pewee and Rufous-winged Tyrannulet. We also visited the museum across from the lodge to view the mummies and learn about ancient Chachapoyan culture. Dinner was once again outstanding – potato salad, BBQ chicken (specially prepared over hot coals) with a cheese casserole and cinnamon ice cream for dessert.

### January 13

We had our usual breakfast at 5AM and were on the road by 5:45AM with first light. In fog and light rain we paused for an Andean Guan along the road, then ascended to the summit (3575m or about 11,700'), and started down the winding road towards Balsas. After two years of road construction, it is now paved all the way as far as Celedin. After having descended about 1000m, the layers of cloud did break. At our first stop we saw **Grey-winged Inca-Finch**, a male Purple-collared Woodstar, Spot-throated Hummingbird and Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant. The vistas were breath-taking, and it was obvious why the scenic area is often compared to the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Our driver Jorge showed his skills on the winding switchbacks. By 10:45AM we had reached Balsas (elevation 825m) and crossed the bridge over the Marañon River. We had only driven 65km and descended 2750m. At a gravel pit near the river we saw a pair of **Black-throated Woodpeckers** and some **Peruvian Pigeons**. As there were few other birds, we started our ascent up the west side of the valley. At several road side stops we did manage to find notable endemic species - **Buff-bridled Inca Finch**, **Marañon Tropical Gnatcatcher**, **Yellow-faced Parrotlet (4 pairs)**. At a wide pullout we stopped for several **Baron's Spinetails** calling from roadside brush, and also had good views of Golden-billed Saltator, Band-tailed Seedeater and Rusty and Moustached Flowerpiercers, with a glimpse of a **Chestnut-backed Thornbird**. By 4PM we reached the west summit after having driven 40km and ascended over 3000m. From there it was a 30-45 minute drive to Celedin. Enroute, it was sad to see how the entire country-side had become totally deforested for farm land. For dinner we went to La Reserva but were disappointed by the indifferent service, lack of any cold beers, bland food,... Our overnight stay at the Hostel Imperial was also disappointing (very basic single rooms, too much street noise, and limited Wifi).

### January 14

We had pre-arranged for a 6AM breakfast at La Reserva, but on arrival were told only their in-house guests could dine at that time. The staff were again indifferent, mixed up our orders, had no fresh juice, ... definitely not worth a return visit. Because it was 7:30AM before we finally could leave town, it was too late to try for the Cajamarca Antpitta. We proceeded directly to Cruz Conga. Near the summit, there were several patches of orange flowers where we saw **Black Metaltail**, Andean Hillstar (once very briefly) and Sparkling Violetears. We also saw White-tailed Shrike-tyrant, Rufous-webbed Bush-Tyrant and Peruvian Sierra-Finch. Near Encanada in a remaining patch of forest Bob and Boris stopped along a small stream and saw **Rusty-crowned Tit-Spinetail** and Black-throated Flowerpiercer. By noon it was time to move on and we drove about two hours to the Rio Chontas canyon. There were few if any flowering plants along the river, only bromeliads high up on the canyon walls. After some searching, we did finally find a female Grey-bellied Comet. We also saw several Black Metaltail, and White-winged Cinclodes. From here it was a long six hour drive to Chiclayo – the worst part was the heavy truck traffic along the Pan-American highway. Dinner was hamburgers at the Real Plaza and it was after 10PM when we finally arrived at the Mary Mar Beach Hotel in Pimentel just northwest of Chiclayo.

## January 15

Despite a 6AM departure, we got lost in Chiclayo – so it took until 8AM before we reached the Santuario Bosque de Pomac known for its Tumbesian endemic species. Along the main birding trail we did find the **Peruvian Plantcutter**, **Rufous Flycatcher**, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Fasciated and Superciliated Wren. It was sunny and was quickly getting very hot, so we stopped for an hour near the reservoir where *Amazilia* Hummingbirds and Tumbes Swallows were skimming the water surface to drink. A good-sized flock of Parrot-billed Seedeaters were in the reedbed. We thought we were only a short drive from Chaparri, but soon realized it was a gruelling two hour trek on a narrow dirt lane along an irrigation canal to Potapoti, where we rejoined the main paved road (Hwy 29). Although the road signs showed it was only 5km to Chaparri, that was the distance to the main gate from where it was another 10km (about an hour) over open, very rugged desert terrain to the lodge itself. In town, we had to pay our entrance fee (25 Sols per person), picked up some food and supplies, and met Daniel who would be our local guide for the next two days. Along the road, Sulphur-throated Finches flew in front of our vehicle. On arrival, we had the entire lodge to ourselves. A feeder near the dining area was a treat, with the endemic **White-winged Guans** coming for seed, along with Croaking Ground-Doves, White-tailed Jays and Golden-bellied Grosbeaks.

## January 16

After enjoying the luxury of a late 6:30AM breakfast, the morning was spent on the trails around the main lodge. I tried for a couple of hours to photograph the hummingbirds bathing in a pool at the nearby stream, but lighting was too dark. *Amazilia* Hummingbirds, Tumbes Hummingbird and female Purple-collared Woodstars were the most common species, and each had their own unique way of bathing. A Long-billed Starthroat made one brief visit. Boris and Bob explored the trails where they saw many new-for-the-trip species including Collared Antshrike (right outside the kitchen area), Red-masked Parakeets, Tumbes Sparrow, Mouse-colored (Tumbesian) Tyrannulet, **Tumbes Tyrant**, Collared Warbling-Finch and Peruvian Pygmy-Owl. Although there were very few mosquitoes, due to recent rains, there were thick swarms of annoying little black sand flies who paid no attention to DEET repellent. After lunch, I returned to Chongoyape with Daniel to visit a private garden with blooming cacti where I saw and photographed **Short-tailed Woodstars** but did not find any Oasis Hummingbirds. We also stumbled across a Lesser Nighthawk in some desert scrub. By late afternoon it started to rain and light rain with heavy overcast skies, so we returned to the lodge. Bob and Boris spent the afternoon in search of good photos of Elegant Crescent-chest but were mostly frustrated in their efforts. After a welcome shower, dinner was mixed vegetables (carrots, broccoli and potatoes) with chicken cutlets and rice pudding for dessert. Although there was no beer, we were served an intriguing local juice made from corn.

## January 17

After an early 5:30AM breakfast (scrambled eggs, cheese, toast, juice and coffee) we drove about two hours to the Casupe Forest which is at a much higher elevation (about 1000m), where we were hoping to see a different mix of Tumbesian endemics. En route, a few **Cinereous Finches** flitted along the road. At our first stop we found a lek of at least twelve Grey-chinned Hermits (western *Porcullas* subspecies). Despite being able to clearly hear them calling, they were difficult to see in the dense bushes and photography was almost impossible. We also saw several *Amazilia* Hummingbirds, Tumbes Hummingbirds, and a Long-billed Starthroat, but no male Woodstars which we had hoped to see. Bob and Boris explored a trail where they saw Pauraque, Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner, Rufous-necked Foliage-Gleaner, Chapman's Antshrike, Gray-and-gold Warbler, Black-cowled Saltator. At another stop we saw **Tropical (Tumbes) Peewee** and Short-tailed Field-Tyrant. By noon, it was time to leave – and as we drove off we came across a majestic male Solitary Eagle which perched several times before it flew off across the valley – a fitting last bird for this leg of the trip. We headed back to Chongoyape where we dropped off Daniel and the cook from the lodge, then drove about two hours to Chiclayo where we again had lunch at the Real Plaza near the airport and waited for our 6PM LAN flight back to Lima. The flight was on time, and by 8PM we had rented our 4x4 SUV from Budget. The Friday night traffic was incredible as it took two hours to cross town (20km) with innumerable near misses because of the aggressive drivers in Lima. By 10PM we checked into the El Anglo Hotel in Chosica (KM28.5). Although clean, the rooms were old and in need of renovations, there was limited hot water and no Wifi service.

## January 18

We had asked the hotel to prepare boxed breakfasts and lunches, so we could be on the road by 6AM . It was about 12km to the Santa Eulalia cutoff. Once thru the town, the dirt road became a narrow one lane riddled with potholes and sheer steep drops to the canyon below. The scenery was absolutely spectacular with clear blue, sunny skies and fortunately there was almost no oncoming traffic. After a couple of stops and with some patience we succeeded in finding a **Great Inca-Finch**. The road was a never-ending series of switchbacks which slowly climbed higher and higher. After having crossed the canyon over a small bridge at a hydro-electric dam, the vegetation became much less arid. Here we soon saw **Rusty-bellied Brush-Finch**, Pied-crested Tit-Tyrant, **Bronze-tailed Comet**, Amazilia Hummingbirds, Mourning Sierra-Finch, **Rufous-breasted Warbling-Finch**, Canyon Canastero and an Andean Tinamou. When we stopped for lunch around noon just past San Pedro de Casta, we had climbed up to 3000m (10,000'). Our ascent continued and soon we were above the tree line. Here we saw four Andean Condors, several **Black Metaltails**, a female **Black-breasted Hillstar**, two **Olivaceous Thornbills**, **Striated Earthcreeper** and Plain-breasted Earthcreeper. By 4PM we neared the summit at over 4800m (16,000') where we encountered high winds and snow. As it was getting dark with worsening road conditions and the altitude had started to affect Boris and myself, we drove on without stopping at the Ticlio bogs. After about an hour we finally reached the main paved highway (Km128) from where it took over two hours to get back to Chosica because a truck had overturned and closed the road in both directions. Back at the hotel we settled for a quick but disappointing fried chicken and French fries dinner.

## January 19

Our last day , we had debated returning to the Ticlio bogs but decided the time schedule was too tight with unpredictable Sunday traffic. Instead we returned to Santa Eulalia where we found several large patches of Lantana flowers which were being visited by female Purple-collared Woodstars, female and immature male Peruvian Sheartails, but no Oasis Hummingbirds. A Blue and Yellow Macaw flew overhead, probably an escapee.– other birds . We had wanted to drive as far as the bridge again, but as we had used our full tank of gas, decided it was wiser to return back to town. We packed up, and then went out for a last lunch at Kausaq – a nearby grill serving local Peruvian food. We enjoyed the mixed chicken and meat grilled platters, and toasted the end of our tour with a glass of Peruvian beer. Although the traffic was much lighter, we still got lost a couple of times trying to get to the airport. We did finally arrive safely by 4PM in time for Boris to check in for his return flight to Tarapoto. Bob and I had to patiently wait for our midnight flights back to Miami and Toronto.

**CONCLUDING COMMENTS:** Another amazing trip – we saw about 323 species of which 68 were lifers for Bob and included 29 of Peru's 110 endemic species. We saw 62 species of hummingbirds, which included all but two of our "must-see" target species ( we missed Buff-tailed Sicklebill and Amethyst-throated Sunangel). Of these 15 were new species for Bob or myself. Our hosts couldn't have been friendlier, especially at Waqanki and Kentitambo. Accommodations at most of the other hotels/ lodges were more than adequate, except for Celedin. Once again the food was excellent, and no one got sick. Lastly, a special thanks yet again to Jorge and Boris for helping organize the tour. Hopefully next year we may return for a tour of southern Peru.

**PHOTOGRAPHS:** extensive galleries of bird photos can be seen at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/pahyyz/sets/72157640432722614/>

<http://www.pahphoto.com/nature> under the Peru 2014 folder

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/boblewis/> -- in his Photostream

Scenic photos from the trip and sites we visited are at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/pahyyz/sets/72157640995648083/>

Here are photos of just a few of the hummingbird and endemic species seen on the trip:



Koepcke's Hermit (Tarapoto)



Marvellous Spatuletail (Huembo)



Rufous-crested Coquette (Waqanki)



Great Inca-Finch (Balsas)



Black-necked Woodpecker (Balsas)



Rufous Flycatcher (Pomac)



Royal Sunangel (Abra Patricia)



Solitary Eagle (Casupe)



Rainbow Starfrontlet(Leymebamba)