

# Peru

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**Leaders:**

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**Inca Tern**

**Day 1:** An early-morning flight to Lima via Madrid followed by a night in a Lima hotel.

**Day 2:** Another early-morning flight, this time to Cusco in the Andes where our guide for the trip, Dr Frank Lambert, met us. After an hours drive to Huacarpay Lakes, we started our first serious birding immediately finding two Plumbeous Rails (and a Common Moorhen!) in a marsh plus the first of many Rufous-collared Sparrows. The reedbeds held Yellow-winged Blackbirds and Wren-like Rushbirds but the true star of this habitat was the Many-coloured Rush-tyrant and we saw at least five of these superb birds. Scanning the sky added White-collared Swifts and American Kestrels whilst a scrubby hillside yielded **Rusty-fronted Canastero** and **Bearded Mountaineer**, our first two endemics of the tour. Our second hummer soon followed and was somewhat larger; a Giant Hummingbird. The hillside also gave us Yellow-billed Tit-tyrant and the first of many tanagers; a superb male Blue-and-yellow Tanager. On the largest lake we added Andean Gull, Andean Coot and Andean Duck (we were now sure where we were!) and a pair of White-tufted Grebes. Walking along the lake edge, rocky grassland bordering open water on one side and scrub-covered hillside on the other, new birds came thick and fast; two Andean Flickers and an Andean Lapwing fed on the grass as did a Rufous-naped Ground-tyrant. Green-tailed Trainbearer, White-browed Chat-tyrant, White-crested Elaenia, Ash-breasted Sierra-finch and Cinereous Conebill were found feeding in small trees and bushes. A Cattle Egret was a more familiar bird before South America again took over with three Hooded Siskins, Bare-eyed Ground-doves, Fulvous Wren, White-browed Ground-tyrant and Greenish Yellow-finch. A large tyrannid on a tall, thin, stick was soon identified as the hard-to-get Grey-bellied Shrike-tyrant. We then drove round the lake to a small marshy pool for lunch. Whilst the drivers set up a table, chairs and all the food we scanned the water. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs fed amongst Andean Coot, Cinnamon Teal, Speckled Teal, Puna Teal and Yellow-billed Pintail and Spot-winged Pigeons flew overhead. A Puna Ibis put in an appearance as did a Black-billed Shrike-tyrant and a few Eared Doves whilst Chiguanco Thrushes were abundant. Later, en route to our hotel, we stopped when a couple of raptors were spotted from the moving bus. A good time to stop as we all had the chance to admire three Black-chested Buzzard-eagles soaring overhead, plus Brown-chested Swallows and Andean Swifts feeding around a mountainside. At the hotel we were soon birding around the lush gardens picking up more new birds; White-bellied Hummingbirds, Black-throated Flowerpiercer, a superb Black-backed Grosbeak, and a pair of Torrent Tyrannulets in addition to some of the birds we had seen earlier in the day.

**Day 3:** Today we had quite a long drive high up into the mountains. We stopped on the way up and exited the bus only to find it pretty cold outside so gloves and hats soon appeared! We had stopped at a site for White-tufted Sunbeam and had soon seen at least three of these beautiful hummingbirds. A bird atop a tree turned out to be a Red-crested Cotinga whilst another singing lower down in the same tree was Golden-billed Saltator. Quality birds but the best was to come. Frank played the call of Stripe-headed Antpitta and soon we were watching this great bird down to a just couple of metres. The first of many Bar-winged Cinclodes put in an appearance quickly surpassed when Gill spotted three birds flying very high overhead. Andean Ibis and, although distant, they were good birds to get. Our next stop by a steep grassy slope quickly resulted in a couple of the endemic **Junin Canastero** singing on the low grass. Our final stop before our target location was necessitated by two Mountain Caracaras sitting by the side of the road. We stopped for breakfast at Abra Malaga (4300m), a somewhat surreal experience sitting in chairs with a table full of food in front of us surrounded by the high Andes! Bolstered by food and the sight of 33 Puna Ibis, 4 Andean Lapwings, more Mountain Caracaras and what was probably our three earlier-seen Andean Ibis flying past just below us calling loudly, we began the slow walk up the slope to get to the valley beyond. More Bar-winged Cinclodes were seen soon followed by Tacanowski's and Cinereous Ground-tyrants, Plumbeous Sierra-finches and our main target species, Streak-fronted Canastero. We made it to the top, an ascent of only about 40 metres, and were rewarded with stupendous views of a huge valley and stunning snow-capped mountains. Truly a spectacular location to be in made even more

special when Dave spotted two birds circling above the mountain in front of us, these were the hoped-for Andean Condors, an adult and a juvenile, superb. Time to begin the descent to the *Polylepis* woodland, a tree endemic to the Andean Paramos, which support several highly sought-after endemic and rare species. A surprisingly confiding Puna Tapaculo was found, (well, confiding for a tapaculo, at least it was in the open for a while!). Plain-coloured Seedeaters were also found in our first scattered *Polylepis* trees but our target birds were in the denser woodland. The first bird to be found was a beautiful Tawny Tit-spinetail that came pretty close and showed very well and was soon followed by Ash-breasted Tit-tyrant and two superb D'Orbigny's Chat-tyrants plus another Puna Tapaculo. These were however, overshadowed by our main target species found feeding quietly beneath the trees. It is very hard to see Royal Cinclodes as they now have very small, fragmented range and are very rare, with a scattered population of probably only about 300 individuals in the world. But we had seen this highly enigmatic bird and even those suffering slightly from the altitude were happy! We then added another endemic to the list in the form of **White-browed Tit-tyrant** and Birdfinders was certainly living up to its name and reputation. The rest of the walk down, after leaving the trees, was quiet but we did see Variable Hawk, the lovely Peruvian Sierra-finch and Blue-mantled Thornbill. After lunch we wandered only a couple of metres when we found another endemic: **Chestnut-breasted Mountain-finch**. Seeing this bird would save us time tomorrow as we had another site for it but it took some getting to. Some of us also picked up Tyrian Metaltail here, feeding on flowers only inches from the path.

**Day 4:** Today we left Cusco to drive the Manu Road, a very long track more than a road but one that is quite well used despite its rough nature. Our first stop was when I shouted that we had just past an Andean Ibis sitting on the ground. Piling out of the bus, everyone got great views of this bird together with another standing close to a Puna Ibis, which was nice for comparison, together with Andean Lapwings for supporting cast. Despite his extensive experience in Peru, Frank said he had never seen Andean Ibis so well. Next stop was a rather barren and arid field where we found three Slender-billed Miners and a Spot-billed Ground-tyrant whilst a raptor appearing over the ridge was a Cinereous Harrier. Stopping in a town to refuel, we spent some time on the bridge over the river where common Peruvian birds were seen: Black Phoebe, Torrent Tyrranulet, Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Chiguanco Thrush and, of course, Rufous-collared Sparrow. Then it was back to serious birding and the hunt for the next endemic. A bush and tree strewn valley was the site and bird-filled it proved to be. Our target was soon seen, four **Creamy-crested Spinetails**, exceptionally good-looking birds I must say. Flower-covered trees held Tufted Tit-tyrant and White-tufted Sunbeam plus single Crimson-mantled Woodpecker and White-bellied Woodstar. Back on the road until we reached the border of Manu Cloud Forest Reserve at Tres Cruces, the drivers set up the table and cooked lunch while we walked down a path to see what we could find. Black-throated Flowerpiercers were again found together with Moustached Flowerpiercer soon followed by a very attractive Grass Wren. Scribble-tailed Canastero (who named that one!) performing for us nicely in the grass whilst more D'Orbigny's Chat-tyrants, 3 Cinereous Conebills, White-throated Tyrranulet, Tufted Tit-tyrant and Mountain Caracara kept interest high. This evening we were to camp high in the mountains and as ever, our superb drivers did all the work and set up the tents whilst we went birding. Our first stop gave us the first of many Shining Sunbeams whilst a calling bird was tracked down and found to be a diminutive Black-throated Tody-tyrant. Mountains species continued to be found: Sierran Elaenia, Great Thrush and Dark-faced Brush-finch. Near the camp we encountered a small flock of tanagers comprising Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanagers and Golden-collared Tanagers. Time for a drive a little way down the mountain and we hit a mixed bird flock. This is where the excitement and tension really mounts with lots of birds, moving quickly through, so much to see and identify as bird names are called from all directions. Blue-capped Tanagers and a Streak-throated Bush-tyrant were briefly interrupted by 2 beautiful Grey-breasted Mountain-toucans flying over. We were soon back with the flock however, adding Hooded Tanager, Capped Conebill, a superb male Gould's Inca, White-crested Elaenia, Chestnut-bellied Mountain-tanagers, Long-tailed Sylph, 3 Blue-and-black Tanagers, Superciliated Hemispingus and Pearled Treerunner. Wow, hardly time to draw breath! A very-attractive endemic was our next target and **Marcapata Spinetail** was soon on our ever-growing list, then another flock and it all started again! White-banded Tyrranulet, Mountain Wren, Rust-and-yellow Tanager, Citrine Warbler and Spectacled Whitestart were all new for the trip. Almost our last bird of the day was a real gem. At a secret site, we were led down a path and one individual of our target species was seen briefly by a couple of people in front but quickly disappeared. Had we missed our only chance? Frank walked down the path and soon called quietly that we should come down. We descended as quickly as possible and the whole group was soon admiring a truly special bird, at a distance of about 5 metres we watched a **Red-and-white Antpitta** in the open, showing superbly for around 10 minutes. A very special moment for all of us as this is a rarely seen endemic. The last birds seen in daylight were two Andean Guans and the last bird of the day was seen when we walked the road in the dark. An owl flew right over our heads and we were all surprised, and admittedly slightly disappointed, to note that it was a Barn Owl, albeit of the contempta race!

**Day 5:** A pre-dawn gathering saw us standing only metres from our tents listening for Swallow-tailed Nightjars. One bird flew past giving rather brief views and we heard a distant Andean Snipe drumming. After breakfast we headed down the eastern slope of the mountains towards the famous Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge. It was quite a way to go and we had a lot of birding to do. Forest birding here is definitely a case of bursts of excitement interspersed with periods of no birds at all unless we were at a specific site for a target bird. So, our first flock appeared and we sorted through Chestnut-bellied Mountain-tanagers, Blue-and-yellow Tanagers, Grass-green Tanager, Hooded Tanager and Black-backed Grosbeak ever more confidently. Shining Sunbeams were seen at all stops and we soon also picked up Azara's Spinetail and Mountain Cacique whilst 2 half-hidden birds in a bush turned out to be White-collared Jays. Our next stop added the very nice Rufous-breasted Chat-tyrant and the first of numerous Cinnamon Flycatchers, another classy-looking bird. These were soon followed by two Andean Guans and another of our target birds, a Barred Fruiteater. This continued along most of the road, stop when we saw a flock and lots of birds to look at. The good thing about birding here is you get more opportunities to see birds you have previously missed in the flocks and our next one was no exception with many of the same birds plus Glossy-black Thrush and Masked Flowerpiercer. A stop looking down the valley gave us yet another flock, which included two Pearled Treerunners, Barred

Becard and Smoke-coloured Pewee. Stopping on a corner, Frank played a tape saying the bird we were looking for could be here. Could be?, within seconds, a superb male Golden-headed Quetzal flew straight over our heads and sat in a tree above us, easily 'scopable. In the next few tens of metres we saw six of these stunning birds! In the same area we also found Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Streaked Tuftedcheek, Mountain Wren, Fawn-breasted Tanager and Slaty Tanager whilst a little further on, we picked up a distant flying Black-and-chestnut Eagle, soon followed by Ochraceous-breasted Flycatcher and a very beautiful Maroon-chested Chat-tyrant. Lunchtime, but a hummingbird that kept whizzing in and out meant that we were up and down like yo-yos! Eventually we all saw it well and identified it as Buff-thighed Puffleg. During this time we also found Bolivian Tyrannulet and 2 Montane Woodcreepers. Back on the road, well, walking down the road, another flock was encountered that included new birds in the form of Yellow-whiskered Bush-tanager, Rufous-chested Tanager, Saffron-crowned Tanager, Brown-capped Vireo and Pale-edged Flycatcher whilst Chestnut-collared Swifts flew overhead and a close adult Black-and-chestnut Eagle showed well. Then we hit a small problem, a traffic jam! There had been a landslide about a kilometre down the road from us and no one could pass. Fortunately a group of workers were on the scene to rebuild the road. Not a problem as while they did that we went birding and came across some good birds: Beryl-spangled & Yellow-throated Tanagers, Ochre-faced Tody-tyrant, Orange-bellied Euphonia and noisy, fly-past Scaly-naped Amazons. We also managed to lure into view a Southern White-crowned Tapaculo. By now the road had been repaired but we took the precaution of walking over the rebuilt section with the bus following us, wimps! Not long after, we stopped again and found, you guessed it, another flock of birds; Common Bush-tanager, Versicolored Barbet, Blue-winged Mountain-tanager and Black-capped Hemispingus. Our final stop of the day was at dusk. We were told to stand looking up a wooded mountainside and wait. About fifteen minutes later we gave a collective gasp as an adult male Lyre-tailed Nightjar suddenly appeared from the wood, circled overhead and disappeared back into the forest. A great end to another superb day and well satisfied we headed down the road to the Cock-of-the-rock Lodge.

**Day 6:** Dawn saw us breakfasting and birding the lodge garden. As we watched birds began coming in or moving through; Golden, Paradise, Silver-beaked & Blue-grey Tanagers and Buff-throated Saltator. The garden had a few hummingbird feeders and these attracted Violet-fronted Brilliant, Wire-crested Thorntail, Many-spotted Hummingbird, Sparkling Violetear, Wedge-billed Hummingbird and Booted Racket-tail, we also had our first Speckled Chachalacas and Bananaquit. Then it was time for the reason that people come here, the Cock-of-the-rock lek. As the door to the viewing platform was opened we were immediately faced with a male Andean Cock-of-the-rock. We filed in and sat down to watch three displaying males, superb birds. In the trees we also found Russet-crowned Warbler and Slate-throated Whitestart. Walking up the road it was again flock time with Streak-necked Flycatcher, Marble-faced Bristle-tyrant, Orange-eared & Spotted Tanagers and Yellow-throated Bush-tanager. In a dark gap hole in the bushes and after some intense searching, we were delighted to locate a male Yungas Manakin. Walking further up the road we encountered further solitary birds and flocks which included Tropical Kingbirds, Social Flycatchers, Grey-mantled Wren, Lemon-browed Flycatcher, Three-striped Warbler, Black-goggled Tanager, Yellow-breasted Antwren together with some Brown Cappuchin monkeys. Various other stops added more great birds: Crested Quetzal, Streaked Flycatcher, Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant and Golden-crowned Flycatcher. Next, we made a short drive up the road to a bridge over a boulder-strewn river with steeply wooded sides. In almost no time we had found a pair of the much-wanted White-capped Dipper and a couple of Black Phoebes. We could hear our target bird calling, and it came close but the hoped-for Andean Solitaire did not want to show! We eventually had to give up but were more than pleased when a Bronzy Inca appeared and fed on some flowers by the roadside. Heading back down the road for lunch at the lodge, we added Inca Jay and Blue-necked Tanager to our lists. After lunch we walked around the grounds of the lodge. The vegetation was thick and finding species was not easy but with perseverance we were successful with our first new bird being Tropical Parula. Then we picked up Fulvous-breasted Flatbill and Black-eared Hemispingus and with much work, managed to see a very elusive Slaty Gnateater, Trevor's four-thousandth life bird! Back at the lodge, Frank found a Stripe-breasted Antwren, soon joined by a second, and an Andean Slaty-thrush. Then it was time to go back up the mountain road. The first thing we found was a Woolly Monkey, which apparently are hard-to-see and not common. Dusky-green Oropendolas kept flying up and down the valley and we found our first Russet-backed Oropendola (much more common lower down). Mixed flocks were again encountered and we enjoyed many common colourful tanagers as well as new birds; Blue Dacnis, Purple Honeycreeper, Montane Foliage-gleaner and Olive-backed Woodcreeper. At another of Frank's many sites we found Ash-browed Spinetail but were soon distracted by a large mixed flock of again mostly tanagers with Bay-headed Tanager being new for the list. Yellow-rumped Antwren was a good find with commoner new birds being Olivaceous Siskin and Slaty-capped Flycatcher. Continuing higher up the mountain, we were rewarded with great views of a hoped-for Highland Motmot, plus a Blue-banded Toucanet and a female Andean Cock-of-the-rock. Our final stop of the day was when we heard Andean Solitaire again and we eventually saw two birds albeit rather briefly. After dinner, we gathered at the lodge entrance and played the call of Rufescent Screech-owl. A bird replied but sounded like it was way across the valley. However, Frank knew better and soon located a calling bird in the lodge grounds, sitting on an open branch right next to the path! This owl has a rather quiet call but was happy to give stunning views for all to see.

**Day 7:** Just after dawn we walked down the mountain by the side of a river. A Highland Motmot was seen briefly and we admired another pair of White-capped Dippers. A bus ride took us further down to a specific site for what seemed to be one of the world's most elusive birds: Cabani's Spinetail. We could hear them and got very brief views but they really are skulkers! Eventually most of us had seen enough bits of bird to be able to identify the whole. A little further down we added Warbling Antbird, heard and saw a Chestnut-backed Antshrike and admired two Bluish-fronted Jacamars. In a more open area, where an old landslide had cleared the vegetation and thick vegetation had not returned, we picked up Yellow-browed Sparrow, Brown-chested Martin, Chestnut-bellied Seedeater and Violaceous Jay. We also picked up our first Plumbeous Kite here. Another bird flock added Streaked Xenops, Two-banded Warbler and White-winged Tanager. Near a rocky outcrop, we stopped as we heard

a never-to-be-seen Chestnut-breasted Wren, it came close but never came out, most frustrating. However, all was not lost as we admired a superb Ornate Flycatcher and found **Cusco Warbler** (split from Golden-bellied Warbler and now an endemic). Nearby we picked up Magpie Tanager and a pair of Long-tailed Tyrants. Our first Southern Rough-winged Swallows put in an appearance and we found Grey-capped Flycatcher and Black-faced Dacnis. Then it was time for a long drive down to the river for a crossing to reach Amazonia Lodge. The temperature in the village from where we caught the boat was hot as we watched our first Yellow-rumped Cacique sat on a roof and Blue-grey Tanagers building a nest in a nearby house. The river crossing took only ten minutes but in that time we picked up Cobalt-winged Parakeet, Vermilion Flycatcher, White-winged Swallow and Purplish Jay. We were soon walking the couple of kilometres through the lowland forest to the lodge. The walk was slow, due to both heat and finding birds: Black-tailed Trogon, Undulated Tinamou and Crimson-crested Woodpecker took our attention. Then four very-noisy Red-throated Caracaras flew overhead and landed in trees above us, a Squirrel Cuckoo was found high in the trees, a Grey-breasted Woodrail ran across the path and we found single Bamboo Antshrikes and Blue-black Grosbeaks. At the lodge we were immediately directed to a large tree to see a roosting Grey Potoo. The gardens held Red-capped Cardinals and Masked Crimson Tanagers and the numerous small flowering bushes attracted hummers including a beautiful male of Fork-tailed Woodnymph and Golden-tailed Sapphire. Beneath the bushes we found a Pale-legged Hornero, Little Cuckoo showed briefly in a tree, a Grey-fronted Dove walked across the grass, two Chestnut-fronted Macaws flew overhead and were soon followed by a pair of Blue-and-yellow Macaws, we were liking this place already! After getting settled in, we took a short walk through the forest to a small stream. Here we had our first Hoatzins and an American Purple Gallinule. On the opposite bank Blackish, Black-throated and Silvered Antbirds were seen well whilst a Rufous-breasted Hermit flew past and a Chestnut-eared Aracari landed in a tree on the skyline. Retracing our steps, we added Band-tailed Antbird and found more Speckled Chacalacas before Frank heard an Amazonian Antpitta and I was lucky enough to be in just the right position when it walked across a small opening behind a fallen tree. We all had more luck with a Black-faced Antthrush that walked rail-like across the leaf-littered ground and showed exceptionally well. Back at the lodge, we were agreeing the time for dinner when a beautiful Gould's Jewelfront suddenly appeared on a hummingbird feeder right next to us together with our first Black-faced Nunbird! After dinner, we heard and had good views of a Tawny-bellied Screech-owl and a flypast Short-tailed Nighthawk.

**Day 8:** We had the whole day at Amazonia Lodge and new birds continued to be added starting with Blue-headed Parrots flying overhead and a Blue-tailed Emerald feeding on the flowers. Black-billed Thrush was found as we watched the nesting Yellow-rumped Caciques, a bird atop a nearby tree turned out to be a Masked Tityra and as we watched this we found a Blue-throated Piping-guan in another tree and noticed at least 11 Swallow-tailed Kites soaring in the distance. As we explored the forest around the lodge, we found Little Woodpecker, Dusk-headed Parakeet and a Brown Agouti. Searching the understorey, we found a Rusty-belted Tapaculo and nearby Buff-throated Woodcreeper whilst sitting quietly deep in a bush, a Semi-collared Puffbird. The forest just kept producing new species for us; Goeldi's Antbird, Blue-crowned Trogon and Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers. A small raptor flew into a tree and was easily identifiable as a Laughing Falcon, 2 Cinereous Tinamous were found on the path and our first Crested Oropendola was seen feeding in a tree. Black-throated Toucanet was next to be added soon followed by Greater Yellow-headed Vulture soaring overhead. Continuing along the forest trails we hit a foliage-gleaner few minutes: Olive-backed, Chestnut-winged and Chestnut-capped Foliage-gleaners, followed by Juruá Woodcreeper, Long-winged Antwren, Pygmy Antwren and Lineated Woodcreeper. At the lodge there is a hummingbird feeder set just inside the forest and by sitting here, we picked up Grey-breasted Sabrewing. A White-bearded Hermit then saw us, moved to within one metre of us, hovered facing us, then flew off! Our target bird, the endemic **Koepcke's Hermit** was eventually seen by a few. Back out in the gardens, a male Rufous-crested Coquette was found feeding on the flowers and a pair of Thick-billed Euphonias visited their nest in a nearby tree. At lunchtime John and I went for a walk along the main path. We had two good birds, neither of which we were expecting. The first was a huge turkey-like blue bird walking through the forest: a Razor-billed Curassow. Delighted and surprised by this bird we didn't think we see much else, especially considering the time of day. However, we were proved wrong when we came across a Collared Forest-falcon sitting in the open. In the afternoon we returned to the sites with the rest of the group but couldn't relocate the birds. We did get some cracking birds as compensation though; a superb Band-tailed Manakin, Greyish Saltator, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, White-lored Euphonia, Yellow-bellied Dacnis and Zimmer's Tolmomyias. And there was more to come as these birds proved to be the advanced guard of a very large feeding flock containing Yellow-crested Tanager, White-winged Shrike-tanager and Black-capped Becard as well as many other previously seen species. A Black-eared Fairy fly-catched above us and Slender-billed Xenops and White-shouldered Tanager were also added. The walk back to the lodge was extremely productive with White-lined and Southern Chestnut-tailed Antbirds, Olivaceous Woodcreeper and, best of all, found by Frank sitting low in a bush a few metres into the forest and gently calling, a Thrush-like Antpitta. Atypically for antpittas, it stayed still for all to see and we were able to walk away from it!

**Day 9:** Next morning we started birding a new trail and soon found another Little Woodpecker, Green Honeycreeper and 2 Olive-faced Flycatchers. A few Chestnut-fronted Macaws were in evidence and as we admired them, a pair of Lineated Woodpeckers were found in a distant tree. A variety of swifts were high overhead and we identified both Grey-rumped and Pale-rumped Swifts amongst them. A Palm Tanager boosted the already-large tanager list and we had our first Great Kiskadees. Five Red-and-green Macaws flew overhead and Yellow-tufted Woodpecker was found nearby. Our final new bird at Amazonia Lodge was Black-banded Woodcreeper. It was now time for the boat trip to Manu Wildlife Centre. It was to be a lengthy journey, in the end taking almost eight and a half hours, but although the weather was hot and sunny, we were able to bird comfortably with a canopy to shade us and a cooling breeze. A splendid Amazon Kingfisher put into the shade the somewhat duller Drab Water-tyrant, Fasciated Tiger-herons were seen regularly standing on rocks in the river and Black Caracaras fed on the shoreline with the occasional Great Black-hawks. The expected egrets were present: Snowy, Great and Striated, but we were more interested in their cousins: Cocoi Heron and Capped Heron (a very strange looking heron!). Waders

were few but we did find the two most-wanted; Collared Plover and Pied Lapwing. White-banded Swallows are very classy birds and we saw plenty of them, along with their much commoner cousins; White-winged Swallows. Giant Cowbirds fed along the shore and both Amazon and Large-billed Terns showed well. The latter is a superb bird and one of my top birds of the trip. Both Grey and Crane Hawks were seen by the river shore but were not as obvious as two huge Horned Screemers walking slowly along a sandy bar. Flocks of Short-tailed Swifts were seen to live up to their name appearing completely tailless! We encountered two flocks, of about 25 and 35 birds respectively, of Sand-coloured Nighthawks, either roosting on dead tress lying in the river or flying along the river. Muscovy Ducks were eventually found and we saw Swallow-wings sitting high in the riverside trees. A stork proved some excitement but it was 'just' a Wood Stork and as we got nearer to Manu we began seeing our first Scarlet Macaws. We briefly stopped at the village of Boca Manu to change engines as our first one was suffering problems. Fortunately the boatmen carried a spare and had it changed in about half an hour, whilst we drank cool drinks in a shop in the village. As we got out of the boat at Manu Wildlife Centre we came across two men carrying a catfish they had just caught, it was about four feet long and very heavy. We ate it during the course of the next few days! The final new bird of the day was in the gardens of Manu Wildlife Centre, Cinnamon-throated Woodcreeper.

**Day 10:** Today we all got a surprise. A weather system known as a 'FriaJe' (pronounced free ah ha) had settled over the Amazon overnight and brought with it cold air. None of us expected to be birding in the Amazon rainforest whilst wearing multiple layers of clothing, and in some cases, gloves and woolly hats (Vaughan!!) The cool was pleasant enough but it had a negative affect on the birds and we had three days of lower-than-usual species numbers. Not to be deterred by cold weather (about 15c during the day), we headed into the rainforest. First we found Red-necked Woodpecker and could hear White-throated Toucans. Our first antbird was White-flanked Antwren followed by Plain-throated Antwren. Red-crowned Ant-tanagers are birds of understory forest and we found a pair of them soon followed by our first White-faced Nunbird. Whenever a woodcreeper was seen it was tracked and identified. We had two in quick succession; Buff-throated and Elegant. A Needle-billed Hermit was found sitting quietly in the forest and a Black-spotted Bare-eye made a very brief appearance. Then back to antbirds with Grey Antwren being found. High above us Black Spider Monkeys moved through the trees and Mealy Parrots screeched overhead. Time for another Antbird; Black-faced Antbird this time. Still looking high in the trees we found a Band-tailed Manakin lek and watched these lovely little birds doing their dance along the thin upper branches. A small woodcreeper was found that turned out to be Wedge-billed and, after some superb spotting by Frank, we added the diminutive Dwarf Tyrant-manakin to the list. We had seen Chestnut-eared Aracaris before but a group of four causing mayhem as they raided the nests of Yellow-rumped Caciques was an amazing sight. Looking over the river from the lodge we spotted some grey-winged birds that were Bare-necked Fruitcrows and found another Blue-throated Piping-guan. In the lodge gardens we saw another Rufous-breasted Hermit and added Reddish Hermit to our already huge list. Lunch was interrupted by two things, one was a semi-tame female Brazilian Tapir walking around the lodges (she was a big beast!) and the second was a White-vented Euphonia. In the afternoon, we again saw many of the antbirds seen in the morning plus two Rufous-tailed Flatbills (an uncommon species), Brown-mandibled Aracari, Black-bellied Cuckoo, a very nice Great Jacamar, Purple-throated Fruitcrows, Long-tailed Woodcreeper, Black-crowned Tityra and White-faced Cappuchin monkeys.

**Day 11:** Today we set off in the boat down the river to a clay lick named Tambo Blanquillo. We had to get there early to be in the hide (a boat now set in a dry ox-bow) before the parrots and macaws came in. A breakfast of pancakes and syrup was served as we looked through the already-large parrot flocks. There were hundreds if not thousands of birds present, mainly Blue-headed Parrots, but we soon found Mealy Parrots, Red-and-green and Blue-and-yellow Macaws, and one of our target species here, Orange-cheeked Parrot. Amongst the Mealys we also found a few Yellow-crowned Amazons. Unfortunately, despite gathering in huge numbers the birds did not come to the lick because as they were about to descend, an adult and juvenile Great Black-hawk appeared and proceeded to walk through the grass or sit on trees calling loudly. Low vegetation surrounds the hide and in it we found a singing Yellow-browed Sparrow, Chestnut-bellied and Double-collared Seedeaters, Blue-black Grassquit and Little Ground-tyrant. A yellow bird kept briefly appearing and disappearing but eventually showed well as a Subtropical Doradito. As we walked back to the boat we had more seedeaters and a small raptor sitting on top of a thin tree was our first Bat Falcon. We headed back along the river to an area of forest that had a high concentration of bamboo. This habitat has certain species not found in the rest of the forest, species referred to as bamboo specialists. The trail is known as the 'anthrush trail' and of course, there are antbirds here! We soon located a singing male Dot-winged Antwren right above the path which was followed a little later by a White-lined Antbird. Birds here are not normally seen in flocks but usually singly or in pairs. We next found a bamboo specialist in the form of Bamboo (Dusky-cheeked) Foliage-gleaner and then a Dark-billed Cuckoo sitting quietly in a tree not far above our heads. Another bamboo specialist was added to the list with the discovery of a Large-headed Flatbill and we heard, but sadly did not manage to see, Manu Antbird. The rare Dusky-tailed Flatbill was next to fall to give itself up and as we searched for this bird a lone Rufous-capped Nunlet was located. Another foliage-gleaner was soon added to our list; Chestnut-crowned Foliage-gleaner and we also found a pair of Dusky-headed Parakeets. Perhaps the most surprising bird was found when a large bird was seen flying into a tree, again almost just above our heads. We could see it was a raptor and soon identified it as a Grey-breasted Goshawk, a rare bird and better views than Frank had ever had before. It was then back to MWC for lunch and a spot of garden birding. I managed to catch up with the previously elusive Plain-capped Spinetail together with Ochre-bellied Flycatcher and some very confiding Scarlet Macaws, close enough for one to bite a hole in Vaughan's wellie, so they were used to humans! A large spotted bird was a Thrush-like Wren and a sudden flash of bright orange-red turned out to be a Band-tailed Manakin. In the afternoon we walked the Ccollpa (sic) Trail in the rain. Despite the sounds of heavy rain not much water made it through the canopy of leaves. We again found a sitting Needle-billed Hermit and our first Greyish Mourner. New for the trip were Golden-olive Woodpecker, Scaly-breasted Woodpecker, White-winged Shrike-tanager and Pink-throated Becard.

**Day 12:** This morning we headed to an oxbow lake. The short walk from the river to the lake brought us in contact with a vigorous flock of birds and as well as the already-seen Paradise and Masked Crimson Tanagers, we found Turquoise and Green-and-gold Tanagers. Another burst of colour was when a Gilded Barbet came through with the flock and we also managed to track down a White-eyed Attila. A grey bird turned out to be a *Syristes* and some also saw a Wing-barred Piprites. The flock also contained a Blue-crowned Motmot, Hauxwell's Thrush, Black-tailed Tityra and Yellow-bellied Dacnis. A little further on, we added Lettered Aracari and Ruddy Pigeon. The boat that was to take us on Cocha Blanco, the oxbow lake, was a flat rectangle with low chairs arranged in rows of three. As the boat was being prepared we scanned the lake noting Wattled Jacanas, Hoatzins and a Black-collared Hawk. A Rufous-and-green Kingfisher was seen flying across the water and, in the distance, we could see a family of Giant Otters. Our regular river boatmen also crewed the oxbow raft and they punted us gently and almost silently over the shallow water. Both Amazonian and Large-billed Terns were present as were Least Grebes and Muscovy Ducks. Wattled Jacanas were common, walking on the lily pads sometimes right next to the raft. Two Sungrebes were a highlight for all as were amazingly close views of the Giant Otters. The otters followed the raft almost the entire journey, occasionally raising their heads and necks out of the water and barking at us. Lesser Kiskadees were seen closely and we glided past Black Caiman and Limpkins. A small bird feeding on thin overhanging branches was an Amazonian Streaked Antwren and our first Pale-vented Pigeons sat in trees and flew over the water. Three Greater Anis were found and we were lucky enough to come across a pair of Green Ibis. A Bat Falcon flew past and a Grey-breasted Woodrail fed in an open patch by the lakeshore. The eerie sound of Horned Screamers echoing across the lake were a contrast to the silent Rufescent Tiger-herons sat in low trees eyeing the water. The final new bird for the trip was a Bran-coloured Flycatcher. From the boat heading back to MWC we saw a lounging White Caiman and, most satisfying of all, 3 Orinoco Geese, a species we hoped to see but which are getting hard to find. Back at MWC, we walked the forest trails called The Grid. Two each of Collared Trogons Gilded Barbets were seen whilst Screaming Pihás were calling all over the place and we tracked one down, the call is definitely more exciting than the bird! Birds continued to be steadily found with our first Casqued Oropendola and Red-stained Woodpecker followed by a female White-throated Antbird, Spot-winged Antshrike, Lemon-throated Barbet and finally Dusky-capped Greenlet. After lunch, it was time to ascend the 30m canopy tower. It is 'interesting' climbing up a wobbling spiral metal staircase but at least the two wooden platforms at the top are stable. Getting into the canopy is essential to find some rainforest specialities that either rarely reach the ground or are normally only seen flying over. Our tree was fruiting and was particularly popular with Cobalt-winged Parakeets, amongst whom we found Tui Parakeet. A distant 'scoped bird was identified as a White-browed Purpletuft and Fork-tailed Palm-swifts, Greater Yellow-headed Vulture and an impressive adult King Vulture (we later had a juvenile) flew overhead. Scanning the trees, we found Great Jacamar, White-lored and Rufous-bellied Euphonias whilst a nearby flowering tree was a feeding site for hummers; with White-chinned Sapphire and White-necked Jacobin (a very classy bird) new to the list. A Bare-necked Fruitcrow was nesting nearby as one or two kept appearing with nest material in their beaks. Another Bat Falcon was seen and we also found a Chestnut-winged Foliage-gleaner. Things got particularly exciting when someone found a Cream-coloured Woodpecker, one of those birds everyone wants to see. It showed extremely well and was surprisingly yellow rather than cream coloured. Our tree then hosted a Short-crested Flycatcher but we were distracted when we had both Channel-billed Toucan and White-throated Toucan. Apparently one has a slightly larger bill than the other but even when seen one after the other this does not appear to be a useful fieldmark, you have to rely on their different calls to be sure of the identifications. Another Red-stained Woodpecker was found followed by a Ringed Woodpecker before someone noticed that a bird had quietly appeared in our tree and we were all able to admire a smart White-necked Puffbird, followed by another then a third! Three in one tree, our tree, and nice and close. A group of about 50 White-eyed Parrots flew past and then a Red-necked Woodpecker joined our ever-growing woodpecker list. The final bird seen from the canopy tower was a nice Double-toothed Kite. The walk through the forest was made in failing light and we could hear Starred Wood-quail and Amazonian Pygmy-owls calling. Back in the lodge gardens we located an Amazonian Pygmy-owl sitting in a tree and it showed well by torchlight.

**Day 13:** This morning was warmer than the last few days and it looked like the friaje had moved on. We headed back to the canopy tower to see what else we could find. A highlight was a Southern Tamandua, a species of anteater with golden fur. As well as many of yesterday's species we found another puffbird, this time Striolated Puffbird, eventually seeing two or perhaps three individuals plus three Slate-coloured Hawks, Brown-mandibled Aracari and Plum-throated Cotinga. A hummingbird was seen to be fly catching in a large open area and we admired this Long-billed Starthroat as it chased flies around the sky, occasionally giving us flashes of iridescence. Two small groups of White-bellied Parrots shot past and we had above-the-bird views of a Band-tailed Manakin. Frank located a Short-tailed Pygmy-tyrant, a tiny bird that is their smallest passerine in the world. Finally, at the base of the tower after the long descent we had excellent views of a pair of Plumbeous Antbirds. We then made a quick visit to The Grid where there are always new birds to be found. As usual, we were checking all woodcreepers and as we watched a Wedge-billed we found the much-larger Amazonian Barred Woodcreeper. Then we had good views of a pair of Dusky-throated Antshrikes followed by a sudden stop as a group of Pale-winged Trumpeters walked across the path in front of us. It was then back to a bit of colour with Amazonian White-tailed Trogon and White-throated Woodpecker. A feeding flock included many species we had seen before plus the uncommon Rufous-tailed Foliage-gleaner. After lunch, we went to another oxbow lake for two special birds. On the walk between the river and the oxbow lake we had great views of a Black-spotted Bare-eye. The resident species of this oxbow were broadly similar to the last oxbow but with two critical differences. Again we boarded our raft and saw another Sungrebe and as we moved slowly and silently through the water, under a clear sky and with a warm sun for a change. As we cruised past a colony of Yellow-rumped Caciques we came across target species number one; a Purus Jacamar, sitting on an open branch over the lake. We were still missing target species number two so on the return trip all eyes were looking for black birds. Three new trip species were seen as we searched, one on one bush, Large-billed Seedfinch and then on the very next bush Lesser Seedfinch! As we watched them, Frank spotted another small bird in front of them; White-lored Tyrannulet. As we approached the jetty, we saw a distant black bird so docked

as quickly as possible and 'scoped it. Sure enough there was our target species number two; a male Pale-eyed Blackbird with a female close by. The male flew towards us then another appeared and sat just across the lake from us. Both highly range-restricted species seen, what a great end to the boat trip. But it wasn't the end, something was calling loudly across the water and we soon located a fine male Spix's Guan. Now we could say that it was a great end to another bird-filled day!

**Day 14:** We started the day back at the Antthrush trail with a female Goeldi's Antbird. We heard (and amazingly saw very well) 2 Cabani's Spinetails together with a White-backed Fire-eye. Bamboo Foliage-gleaner was again seen followed by another target bamboo specialist, the beautiful Rufous-headed Woodpecker and just below the woodpecker we spotted a Rufous-breasted Piculet. A little further on and Vaughan found a good bird; Peruvian Recurvebill, a much-wanted species for all. Despite putting in a lot of effort, we heard both Rufous-fronted Antthrush and Manu Antbird but didn't manage to see them but we did finish the morning with two impressive Red-billed Scythebills and a pair of Great Antshrikes. In the afternoon we again worked the Ccollpa Trail. We had a cracking start when, as we crossed the bridge, a Sunbittern flushed and sat on a nearby branch before flying down stream. Some way into the forest and we came across four Broad-billed Motmots high in the trees and then found another mixed flock including yet another new tanager, Yellow-bellied Tanager. As we checked through the flock a Golden-green Woodpecker was found plus another Rufous-tailed Flatbill. Finally, as we walked back in the fading light, we had a brief view of a Rufous-capped Antthrush as it flew into cover. Frank played his taped and hey presto, it re-appeared walking slowly across the path, stopped to look at us, then disappeared into the undergrowth. After dinner we went out in the lodge gardens playing the eerie call of Great Potoo. We had heard them other nights but not managed to see one. Suddenly there it was, a huge Great Potoo on a nice open stump, posing beautifully in the torchlight. Pretty well everyone staying at the lodge came out to have a look and to borrow binoculars to admire this bird. Tomorrow we were due to leave Manu Wildlife Centre and fly back to Cusco. I say due because we had heard that the plane from Boca Manu had been out of action for the last few days and the only way out was a very long boat ride followed by driving the Manu Road non-stop! Twenty-four hours minimum, probably longer. Not something to look forward to. We had to wait to see what would happen.

**Day 15:** The day dawned sunny and warm again and we heard that a plane had been chartered from Lima to fly down via Cusco and pick us up, we were all mightily relieved. We had about three hours to enjoy the boat trip up river to Boca Manu seeing the usual species plus Swallow-tanager and an adult and three young Capybaras. The walk from the river to the airfield gave us a Pale-winged Trumpeter, one that had been domesticated by the locals, and which liked to walk around with us hoping for food! The airfield is a mile-long strip of grass surrounded by forest. The terminal is a raised, open sided hut with a small radio in it and a set of scales large enough to take bags and people. The luggage transport system was two wheelbarrows and the plane announcement system was the honking of domestic geese on the runway! The runway also held Upland Sandpipers whilst 6 Smooth-billed Anis lurked around the edges in the scrubby bushes. Since the plane took only eight people at a time, we had to split the group. The first group flew out and left three of us to do a spot of birding. Nothing new was added but we did see Roadside Hawk, Grey Hawk and a King Vulture, and lots of Plumbeous Kites.

**Day 16:** Today we were at Cusco railway station just after dawn for the train to Machu Picchu. The train is very comfortable and each carriage is self-contained with two staff, one man, and one woman, on hand to serve food and take care of us. Of course, our main interest was the river we ran alongside for most of the journey. The train leaves Cusco using a series of lines and points. It goes up one line then reverses up another until it clears the hills surrounding the city. Then it's all downhill to Machu Picchu through farmland and rocky gorges. Things got exciting when we reached Ollantaytambo Station, where we stopped alongside the river. Our attention was attracted by a White-browed Chat-tyrant, a bird we had seen before, but this led to the finding of our first White-winged Cinclodes and then came the shout, Torrent Duck! And there was another of the wanted birds of the tour, a male Torrent Duck sat on a rock in the middle of the river. A superb bird and one we had thought we might get only glimpses of as the train went past. By the end of the day however, we had seen no less than 17 males, 14 females and six young, some from the roadside in Machu Picchu. We bird we did only glimpse, but fortunately had seen before, was White-capped Dipper, not uncommon on the river but not easy to see from a moving train. After taking a shortcut through the street vendors, we got on the bus and were soon up at the famous ruins. Andean Swallows were common and we soon found one of our target birds, White-tipped Swift. A juvenile Mountain Caracara was totally oblivious to all the tourists as it sat next to one of our group. After exploring the ruins and taking many photographs we went for lunch. As we ate and looked out of the window we added another bird to the list; White-winged Black-tyrant. Then it was time for a short walk down the road to hunt for Inca Wren. Frank warned us that we had to be quick when the bird came in because it stays in thick cover and usually only stays briefly. It isn't often that Frank is wrong but we were very grateful that he was this time as a beautiful Inca Wren responded immediately to the tape and showed wonderfully to all in the open! We took the bus back down into the valley and were dropped off by a bridge over the river with the aim of walking back to town. This was a good plan as we first had Mitred Parakeets flying past, then found a nesthole of Golden-olive Woodpecker, with an adult flying to and from it and a juvenile looking down at us. As we enjoyed these birds some tanagers were spotted in a nearby tree and yet more species were added to the list; Golden-naped Tanager and Silver-backed Tanager. By the railway, we added Inca Flycatcher and White-eared Solitaire, then the bird we all wanted just because of its name: Oleaginous Hemispingus! Then a warbler was found and we carefully examined its supercilium and to be sure it was our first Pale-legged Warbler. Torrent Ducks were seen well on the river and a pair of Variable Antshrikes added to the antbird list. Some flowering trees attracted hummers, first a Gould's Inca, then Purple-throated Sunangel, and then the endemic **Green-and-white Hummingbird**. We also admired a fine Black-chested Buzzard -eagle as it flew across the road and against the cliffs, and then John shouted Andean Condor. Frank's face when he saw Jon was right and that the bad weather higher up had forced two condors low down, as was a picture! The final highlight of the day was on the train back to Cusco. The sound of piped Peruvian music over the

intercom turned into a fashion show as the carriage staff walked up and down the carriage modelling alpaca clothing! Lots of clapping, cheering and photographs taken proving that it was definitely a great way to pass the time when it was dark outside!

**Day 17:** We took an early-morning flight to Lima where we saw a flock of 100+ Pacific Doves by the airport. We were to see many more. Driving down the coast we noted that all the lampposts held Neotropic Cormorants with patches of guano underneath! The sea was rough and Peruvian Boobies were seen soaring over the waves while Band-tailed and Kelp Gulls flew along the shoreline. Our first stop was a sandy area not far from the coast. It took only a minute or two for us to find two Peruvian Thick-knees standing quietly in the scrub-covered land. Then it was on to a site Frank had heard of but had not been too. We drove along the dry arid edge of the Atacama Desert until we found what looked like a dried lake with quite a lot of scrubby bushes. The ground was extraordinary in that it was cracked, as one would expect a dry lake bed to be, but the cracks were half a metre deep and often covered in vegetation. This made for interesting walking! Despite the challenges of the surface, we had some great birds here: Short-tailed Field-tyrant, Croaking Ground-dove and bright-orange Vermillion Flycatchers. We were seeking hummers here to and soon had both Amazilia Hummingbird and the hoped-for endemic **Peruvian Sheartail**. Next, we made a stop by the shore when someone called cetaceans. There were 20+ Inshore Bottle-nosed Dolphins not far offshore and lots of birds on the beach: 100+ Grey Gulls, Kelp Gulls, Blackish Oystercatcher and Hudsonian Whimbrel. Out at sea were Peruvian Boobies, Inca Terns and a lone Red-legged Cormorant. We stopped for lunch at a seafood restaurant overlooking some rocky mudflats, which was literally teeming with migrant waders. Wilson's Phalaropes, hundreds of Least Sandpipers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Spotted Sandpipers, Hudsonian Whimbrels, Ruddy Turnstones, Black-bellied Plovers, a few Surfbirds, a few Red Knot, even rarities, a Curlew Sandpiper and a flock of Sanderling (second record for Peru!). There were also many Grey-headed, Band-tailed and Kelp Gulls and offshore were 1000+ Peruvian Boobies diving into the sea. We then drove on to our hotel, dropped our luggage off and were soon out again driving through the edge of the Atacama desert to the coast. En route, on the edge of town, we picked up three Coastal Miners. As we arrived at the cliff edge, Inca Terns sat on rocks beneath us and flew virtually around on heads. No sign of our target bird so we moved on a couple of few kilometres where after a short walk, we were soon watching the endemic **Peruvian Seaside Cinclodes** (sometimes called Surf Cinclodes). Continuing our walk along the cliff top, we saw more Grey, Band-tailed and Kelp Gulls, and found, on a wave-splashed rock, two more Peruvian Seaside Cinclodes showing exceptionally well but being harassed by a Blackish Oystercatcher who did not like them being on his rock!

**Day 18:** We began the day early as usual and recorded our first House Sparrows of the trip. Today, we were going out on a boat to the Ballestas Islands but first we made a short drive up the coast to see what we could find. In another sandy-scrubby area we found a Burrowing Owl, sitting on a bush, another Peruvian Thick-knee, Long-tailed Mockingbird, 3 Lesser Nighthawks (seen very well in flight and then sitting on the ground), plus another new bird; Oasis Hummingbird. We boarded the boat in glorious weather and headed out to sea. In front of us was a huge flock of cormorants and as we headed through them, they filled the air, there must have been 10000+ birds. There were also good numbers of Peruvian Boobies and Inca Terns flying overhead, gulls soared around the boat and Peruvian Pelicans watched from the rocks. We soon reached the islands, which were covered with Guanay Cormorants and their product! You could certainly smell it! We quickly found Humboldt Penguins, at least 40 individuals on the rock, plus close views of Peruvian Booby, Inca Tern and Red-legged Cormorant. Having circled the islands we then headed out to sea for a short pelagic. Soon we were seeing Elliot's Storm-petrels and Sooty Shearwaters. We found a Markham's Storm-petrel and a Wilson's Storm-petrel, then a Chilean Skua. Small flocks of Grey (Red) Phalaropes kept flying past and Inca Terns were always around. A flock of seven large gulls on the water caused mayhem when we realised they were Swallow-tailed Gulls, birds everyone wanted to see! What a trip. Sadly, we now had the long drive back to Lima. We again stopped at the fish restaurant and saw many hundreds of birds while we lunched. New birds were Peruvian Tern, Western and Baird's Sandpipers. Out to sea was a flock of 10,000+ Peruvian Boobies stretching across half the horizon! En-route, we stopped several times adding out first dark-headed gull, a Laughing Gull on one and 25 Peruvian Thick-knees in a loose flock on another. Our final Peruvian birding was at a marsh by the roadside. A beautiful Peruvian Meadowlark sang from a fence post, White-cheeked Pintails were on the water and a Killdeer fed on the margins along with birds we had seen before.

**Day 19:** A leisurely morning followed by an overnight flight home arriving on day 20. So, there you have it, splits and various taxonomic indecisions aside we recorded a group total of 576 species. For me, never having been to South or Central America, 510 were lifers! Huge thanks must go to Manu Expeditions for the superb ground arrangements and even more thanks to Frank Lambert, the best guide I have ever been with and without whom our list would have been considerably smaller.