

TESTIMONIAL FIELD GUIDES TEAM – WORLD BIRDING RALLY CHALLENGE NOR AMAZONICO – MAYO 2014

<http://fieldguides.com/news/?p=6395>

World Birding Rally 2014 wrap-up: summary, day-by-day, 50+ photos

June 2nd, 2014 by Rose Ann Rowlett · Add a Comment

For eight days in May, a Field Guides team participated in Peru's World Birding Rally Challenge Nor Amazonico 2014. The Rally, sponsored by PromPeru, the InkaTerra Association, and with additional support from a number of private businesses, such as LAN Peru and various hotels, was in its fourth version, the second on a northern route across Peru. Manuel Bryce, fondly known as Mañuco, deserves much of the credit for having organized the Rallies, which are gaining attention within Peru, this year with the Ministers of both Tourism and the Environment attending the opening ceremonies in Lima.

Last year our Field Guides team of **Dan Lane**, **Jesse Fagan**, and our Peruvian friend Fernando Angulo, won the trophy on the southern route, coming from behind to win by two species. This year, on the northern route, we blew it; we were LOSERS! Joined again by Fernando, our team of **Richard Webster**, **Marcelo Padua**, **Terry Stevenson**, and **myself** came in second (of four teams), tallying only 575 species, 13 species behind the winning total of 588 and more than 50 species behind LSU's team record from the first Rally in the North.



The Field Guides team (Marcelo, Richard, Rose Ann, Fernando, & Terry) at the rim of the Marañon Valley

It wasn't for lack of experience. Richard and I have both held state Big Day records (in California & Texas, respectively) and have been guiding tours to Northern Peru since 1998. Fernando is a bird biologist based in Chiclayo who has birded throughout the country and has done these Peru Rallies before, including the previous northern circuit. And though Terry and Marcelo were both new to Peru, Terry holds the world Big Day record (from Kenya), and Marcelo knows Brazilian birds, is an incredibly sharp birder, and is full of energy and enthusiasm. What we learned was that, faced with a series of (to us, often staggering!) problems, we didn't have the competitive juices it takes to maintain a winning strategy of racing onward to the next "heard-only." In the end, we were out-hustled by an energetic Sunbird/Wings team.

Indeed the enemy was us! We are first birders and field guides; we love birding and guiding, and we loved the personal interactions with Peruvian friends and even strangers along the way. It was the many riches of northern Peru—on this 8-day, 1500-km transect of habitats from the Pacific coastal scrub near Chiclayo to puna grassland near Cajamarca, across the dramatic Marañon and Utcubamba valleys, then down through east-slope cloud forest to Amazonian rainforest near Tarapoto—

that kept presenting the problems that derailed such weak-willed wimps as ourselves.

Just take a look at a few of the problems:

How could we walk away from some 250 **Peruvian Terns**, 190 on the ground at once and many more at sea? We were looking at well over 10% of the estimated total population (600-1700) of this Endangered Species! It was far more than any of us had ever seen at once.



More than 100 Peruvian Terns are in the top photo alone, and there were more on the ground near the mouth of the Rio Reque. (Photos by guide Richard Webster)

How could we not take time to watch that Endangered **Gray-bellied Comet** (BirdLife's population estimate is under 1000) filching nectar from holes pierced by flowerpiercers at the bases of long corolla tubes? Like many hummers, the Comet is a thief when corolla length exceeds bill length and a shortcut is available.



Gray-bellied Comet along the Rio Chonta (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

How could we walk away from a calling **Piura Chat-Tyrant** (a Near Threatened endemic restricted to the Pacific slope of NW Peru) until we had all had good views?



The endemic Piura Chat-Tyrant (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

Or how could we tell Marcelo and Terry that a heard-only **Peruvian Plantcutter** (not only Endangered, but spiffy!) was sufficient for the list? That one cost us an extra early-morning visit to Rafan, where the S. African team (Birding Ecotours), on a similar mission, generously directed us toward a bird they had found. On the way out, we had great views of Peruvian Thick-knees as well.



The endemic and Endangered Peruvian Plantcutter at Rafan (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

How could we head out after that first brief appearance of a male **Spatuletail** even though it was time to hit the road? Instead, we feasted our eyes during its multiple visits, taking time to examine the first known nest of the species and to marvel at photos of the local Spatuletail parade, where kids dress as Marvelous Spatuletails and Andean Cocks-of-the-rock and produce original paintings and drawings of these charismatic species. Enjoying the Spatuletail seemed especially appropriate since some generous Field Guides clients were donating funds on our behalf to support another local community effort to protect the Spatuletail's habitat. Okay, we were late getting away from Huembo, and heavy rain caught us along the Rio Chido, where we had been hoping to end our day with some high-elevation species common there.



A male Marvelous Spatuletail visits the feeders at Huembo, ECOAN's Spatuletail reserve, which was opened to the Rally. Reserve manager Santos Montenegro shows us the first known Spatuletail nest, which he found some years ago, when he was still a kid. (Photos by guide Richard Webster)

But hummingbird feeders are always a problem: The wonderful Waqanki feeders near Moyobamba left us all spellbound watching (and videoing) the agonistic interactions of two male **Rufous-crested Coquettes**.



Feisty Rufous-crested Coquettes at Waqanki feeders (Photos by guide Marcelo Padua)

And I had to pry my Honey away from photographing the (endemic) **Koepcke's Hermit** and the glimmering **Gould's Jewelfront** at the Aconabikh feeders on the Cordillera Escalera near Tarapoto.



Koepcke's Hermit (by guide Marcelo Padua) and Gould's Jewelfront (by guide Richard Webster) at Waqanki

Trying to bird the entire east-Andean slope in one day—from Abra Patricia to Tarapoto—was both enthralling (with flock after flock of gorgeous tanagers and their associates) and overwhelming (with flock after flock of gorgeous tanagers and their associates)! Pulling ourselves away from those fabulous mixed-species flocks, for which the east slope of the Andes is justifiably famous, was a staggering problem indeed.



Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager foraging with a flock below Garcia (Photo by guide Marcelo Padua)

And then there were the supportive and hospitable Peruvian people themselves. How could we not have stopped for that surprise group of some 50+ school children (and their teachers) waving U.S. and Brazilian flags at the side of the road and chanting our countries' names: "Bra-zil, Bra-zil," "Estados Unidos, Estados Unidos"?



Marcelo with chanting children cheering us on (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

After all, the primary aim of the Rally organizers was to showcase the incredible diversity of birds in northern Peru, not only to attract additional birders, but to demonstrate the potential value of sustainable ecotourism to local communities, upon whom we all depend to protect the riches of their environment. We encountered many nice surprises along the way—from local foods prepared by welcoming communities to song-and-dance performances by local people after supportive speeches by various mayors and other dignitaries. Some of these were pre-planned—and announced in advance as compulsory stops—but a number were sheer surprises. We loved them all, and we were treated like virtual rock stars in community after community.



Marcelo was “one of the kids” at Cruz Conga while Fernando surveyed the generous layout of mid-morning snacks on a chilly morn at the same site. (Photo by guide Rose Ann Rowlett)

In the end, the cumulative species recorded by all the teams was 777, out of a list of possibilities numbering more than 1000. That’s almost 10% of the world’s birds! Given that, the Rally was a great success, indeed showcasing the biodiversity of northern Peru—even if the sampling was way too small and the time way too short for us wimps. We had a blast, but we have to admit that, more than the strategic challenge, our joy came from sharing the excitement of our friends and fellow guides. Perhaps we should only compete where there aren’t so many fabulous birds!



Rio Marañon Valley from below Abra Barro Negro (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

Thanks to some generous donors among our clients and friends, our Birdathon Rally raised over \$1100 for BirdLife International's community project to conserve more habitat for the Marvelous Spatuletail—a true WINNER! Thanks to all of you who contributed. And there's still time for more winning: If you would like to contribute, contact Peggy Watson in the Field Guides office (by email or by phone at 800-728-4953). Even small amounts can go a long way at the community level in rural northern Peru.

Our day-by-day details continue after the break below...

*Should you dream of enjoying the rich avifauna of northern Peru at a reasonable pace, you're invited to join one of our two tours: **NORTHERN PERU: Endemics Galore (Nov 2-22, 2014 or Nov 1-21, 2015)** or **PERU'S MAGNETIC NORTH: Spatuletails, Owlet Lodge & More (Jul 31-Aug 11, 2014 or Jul 22-Aug 2, 2015).***

DAY BY DAY DETAILS

Here's how our birding went day to day: Based in Chiclayo, we started **Day 1** at Laquipampa, one of several canyons in the arid western foothills of the Andes that still have wild populations of the Critically Endangered White-winged Guan, a species that had been considered extinct for a century before it was rediscovered in the 1970's in these dry forest fragments.



White-winged Guan in flight (by Richard Webster) and birding along the road at Laquipampa (by Rose Ann Rowlett)

Their total wild population is currently estimated to be 150-250 birds. Sure enough, the White-winged Guan was one of the first birds we spotted when we stopped—some miles up a dirt road, at a spot Fernando recommended. Fernando, after all, is a Chiclayo-based biologist who has worked with the White-winged Guan conservation project for some 15 years. It was Fernando who spotted them—two birds on the rocks, high on the steep canyon slope. We had great scope views and were happy to see most of the other teams arrive in time to see them wonderfully as well. We spent much of the morning birding the dry forest of these foothill slopes, where most of the hoped-for Tumbesian specialties fell into place, including even the scarce Piura Chat-Tyrant. Besides the guan, Terry and Marcelo seemed most excited about the sneaky Elegant Crescentchest and the striking White-tailed Jays.



Elegant Crescentchest & White-tailed Jay (Photos by guide Richard Webster)

Then it was back down the canyon, where Marcelo spotted his lifer Fasciated Tiger-Heron on a boulder in the rushing river. There would be multiples of these along the Rio Utcubamba a few days hence, but that first one is always special. And onward to the Bosque Pomac near Batan Grande—after our stop to enjoy and acknowledge the eager and supportive school kids along the way. At Bosque Pomac we encountered some other especially spiffy Tumbesian specialties and Peruvian endemics: Scarlet-backed Woodpecker, Tumbes Tyrant, and Rufous Flycatcher, as well the scarce and local Tumbes Swallow, two of which were perching for photos! Our last stop was at La Vina Reservoir, which was fairly dry and not very productive. We ended the day with 118 species, in second place.



Three specialties of the region: Tumbes Swallow, Tumbes Tyrant, and Rufous Flycatcher (Photos by guides Marcelo Padua & Richard Webster)

Day 2 began with a good Peruvian Plantcutter, six Peruvian Thick-knees, and two Sechura Foxes at Rafan. Then we were off to the coast near the mouth of the Rio Reque. Not only were we blown away by the abundance of Peruvian Terns, but there were dozens of breeding-plumaged Gull-billed Terns, generally considered a boreal migrant to the coast of Peru. What were they doing here? After a walk toward the mouth of the river, picking up most of the expected shorebirds, herons, and the like, we checked what we could see at sea from the highest nearby promontory.



Our vista point for spotting Pacific pelagics south of the Rio Reque (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

Here Blue-footed Boobies were nesting on the cliffs, and Inca Terns and skeins of Peruvian Boobies and Peruvian Pelicans were scattered across the ocean as far as the eye could see. Richard picked up a distant Waved Albatross and a Great Grebe and got us on them. Then we were off to Cajamarca. We stopped for a flock of some 55 Comb Ducks along the shores of a reservoir damming the Rio Jequetepeque, and then we couldn't resist briefly exploring a couple of roadside canyons that looked good for Great Inca-Finch and Cactus Canastero; but we would find neither today.



A brief birding stop in the Rio Jequetepeque basin (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

We pushed onward to Abra El Gavilan, where increasingly moist Andean forest patches disclosed their Black-eared Hemispinguses and Jelski's Chat-Tyrant, and we heard the Unicolored Tapaculo. At the luxurious Hotel Laguna Seca, we turned in our list—maintained on my laptop during the drive—and had welcome hot-water baths pumped into the rooms from natural thermal pools that were indeed the “baños del Inca.” With 175 species, we were still in second place, by 6 species.



Two more Peruvian endemics, the Endangered Plain-tailed Warbling-Finch (by Richard Webster) & the Vulnerable Great Spinetail (by Marcelo Padua), were among the highlights of Day 3.

Day 3 of the Rally was the most relaxed, with the fewest miles to be driven. Of course, wakeup time was still 4:00AM, breakfast at 4:30, and departure at 5:00. But the list was due at 7:00, rather than 7:30 or 8:00PM. We headed south to a canyon north of San Marcos, where we take our tour groups to see the endemic Great Spinetail in a remnant patch of native xeric woodland. Sure enough, a pair responded at our first stop, but they were perhaps more skulking than usual and it took us a while to see one well. After brief forays to bird the canyon for Masked Yellowthroat, Golden-rumped Euphonia, and White-winged Black-Tyrant, we explored some lakes (high-elevation ducks and Silvery Grebes) and some high-elevation forest patches, where we enjoyed such goodies as Red-crested Cotinga, Rusty-crowned Tit-Spinetail, Tit-like Dacnis, and Plain-tailed Warbling-Finch.



Lake near Huinico at 3300 meters elevation (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

In the afternoon we headed north of Cajamarca, up the valley of the Rio Chonta, where we found the Endangered Gray-bellied Comet, the endemic Black Metalltail, and a Giant Hummingbird all at the same flowering tree.



The endemic Gray-bellied Comet and the Giant Hummingbird were using the same flowers along the Rio Chonta. (Photos by guide Marcelo Padua)

We picked up White-winged Cinclodes, Torrent Tyrannulet, and Andean Swift (here at the northern extent of their range) and still had time to explore some puna and high-elevation scrub near La Encanada, where we found Baron's Spinetail and another flashy endemic, the Rufous-eared Brush-Finch. The pace today suited us well; it was more like being on our Field Guides tour of Northern Peru. Our total at the end of the day was 222, still 7 behind the lead.



Last new birds of Day 3: two Rufous-eared Brush-Finches (Photo by guide Marcelo Padua)



We crossed into the breathtakingly beautiful Rio Marañon Valley at 9:30AM on Day 4 and gazed down into what is often considered the greatest single biogeographic barrier in South America. (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

In contrast with Day 3, **Day 4** attempts to cover in one day what our Field Guides tour allots 3 days for (and for good reason)! Today, besides attending a couple of welcoming local functions (at Cruz Conga and Limon), we would pack into one day: birding the puna zone (mostly around 11,600'; seeing canasteros, cinclodes, hillstars, earthcreepers and pipits); crossing a pass into the spectacular Marañón Valley and its arid upper slopes (where we delighted in such specialties as Chestnut-backed Thornbird, Marañón Thrush, Buff-bellied Tanager, and Gray-winged Inca-Finch); continue down to cross the Rio Marañón itself, a desert community at 3000' (with Peruvian Pigeon, Bare-faced Ground-Dove, Black-necked Woodpecker, and Buff-bridled Inca-Finch); then up the east slope of the valley, all the way to Abra Barro Negro ("Black Mud Pass"), at the crest of a ridge between the Marañón and Utcubamba drainages.



Two endemics at Hacienda Limon: Gray-winged Inca-Finch & Chestnut-backed Thornbird (Photos by guide Richard Webster)



Bare-faced Ground-Doves (by Richard Webster) flush from the arid slopes above Balsas while the endemic Buff-bellied Tanager (by Marcelo Padua) inhabits the riparian thickets near Hacienda Limon.



Afternoon in the treeline forest near “Black Mud Pass” (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

It was a beautiful afternoon in the treeline forest zone, and we had our first impressive mixed flock, as well as such goodies as the endemic Coppery Metaltail and Russet-mantled Softtail. There is so much to see here that we would plan to come back the following morning, but we had Swallow-tailed Nightjar and a lovely, calling Koepcke’s Screech-Owl before reaching the Hotel La Casona in Leimebamba ahead of the 8:00PM deadline. We had time for wine while we updated our list before attending an official welcoming function in the plaza and having 9:30 dinner back at the hotel. Whew! When the dust cleared, Field Guides was leading by 3, with 271 species.



Two more highlight endemics, Coppery Metaltail & Koepcke's Screech-Owl, on another day rich in Peruvian endemics (Photos by guide Marcelo Padua)

Day 5 saw us up near Barro Negro before sunrise, having driven through mist and clouds and emerged atop a sea of puffy white, to a terrific vista of treeline forest, full of bird activity.



Dawn of Day 5, above the clouds at Barro Negro (Photo by guide Rose Ann Rowlett)

Highlights were hearing a pair of White-throated Screech-Owls (which we'd never had at that locality before) and showing Terry and Marcelo their lifer Rufous Antpitta (of the taxon *obscura*, surely to be upgraded to a distinct species). As we walked along the road, Marcelo took time to sneak into a thicket to see the tiny Rusty-breasted Antpitta we had called in close!



Looking back toward our bus at Barro Negro as the sun warmed the slopes (Photo by guide Rose Ann Rowlett)



Scanning for Andean Condors along the Rio Atuen canyon (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

After adding a number of montane species, we returned to Leimebamba and took the pre-planned horseback ride up the lovely Rio Atuen canyon, in hopes of seeing Andean Condor and to support the community wranglers. After an hour of searching the cliffs, where condors sometimes breed, we returned to Adriana von Hagen's hummingbird feeders across from the wonderful little Chachapoya museum. After getting good looks at the spectacular Rainbow Starfrontlet and the incredible Sword-bill, Terry and Marcelo toured the museum while a Peruvian reporter interviewed Richard and me as we sat watching the feeders. After lunch

during the drive (as always!), we descended along the lovely Utcubamba River as it started to rain. We caught up with and passed most of the other teams at Hacienda Chillo, where they were searching for a stakeout pair of roosting Koepcke's Screech-Owls. We made the compulsory stop to tour the newly opened Casa Andina Achamaqui hotel (with Terry spotting our first Oriole Blackbirds on the way in) and then headed for Huembo, the Marvelous Spatuletail Interpretation Center, to be followed by some birding en route to Pomacochas. But the rain became heavier and heavier, in an area that had already had unusually heavy rains, and suddenly we came to an active mudslide across the road; small boulders were buried in the mud and still sliding downslope. Traffic was starting to accumulate on the other side, and we were told heavy equipment had been beckoned to clear the road eventually. At least the rain was letting up. So we backtracked to a side road, where we could climb the arid slopes of the Utcubamba Valley and go birding. We fished for Marañon Crescentchest in the first prime-looking habitat, and Marcelo spotted one sneaking in; a pair then responded well, allowing photos and one of our unexpected highlights of the trip.



Active mudslide, with more rain to come (Photo by guide Richard Webster)



An endemic Marañon Crescentchest on arid slopes of the Utcubamba Valley
(Photo by guide Marcelo Padua)

By the time we returned to the mudslide spot, it had been cleared and we sailed across and headed for the Huembo feeders that attracted Bronzy Inca and the iconic Marvelous Spatuletail—several full-tailed males! It was great to see Santos Montenegro, the on-site manager of the Spatuletail Center; he had been a young kid living on the slopes above Pomacochas when we met years ago and when he used to take our groups to see the Spatuletail on a patch of his land that the family had kept natural to support this fabulous hummingbird. It was Santos who found the first nest known to science and would eventually be instrumental in getting its elaborate courtship behavior filmed. We eventually pulled ourselves away from the Huembo feeders and headed for the Rio Chido, where remnant forest along the rushing montane stream secrets a handful of montane species that would have been new for us. However, now it was raining again—and heading our way, closing in from up the mountain. We managed to see a flock of Speckle-faced Parrots and but a few other species before the heavy rains quieted all activity. We reached the Hotel Puerto Pumas in Pomacochas at dusk.

Day 6, Pomacochas to Tarapoto, would be the longest day of the Rally—not so much for the number of miles traveled, but because of the many rich habitats transected as we traveled down the forested east slope of the Andes. It was raining when we awakened and for much of the drive to Abra Patricia (too wet for nightjars), where it had rained most of the night. It was cloudy-dark and activity was well below normal at ECOAN's Owlet Lodge feeders. But the Tayra coming to the banana feeder was a highlight for Terry and Marcelo, along with another Sword-billed Hummingbird! Though it was hard to leave, knowing how many species we were walking away from, we continued downward, the rain having stopped and the sky brightening.



A responsive Yellow-throated Tanager with a flock near the Garcia Ridge (Photo by guide Marcelo Padua)

We made strategic stops for specialties and flocks, of which there were many! A male Royal Sunangel was feeding on flowers near Garcia Ridge, where we added the endemic Bar-winged Wood-Wren as well. But it was the mixed-species flocks that comprised the bird highlight of the morning—full of tanagers (favorites for Terry and Marcelo included Yellow-throated Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers, and Paradise Tanagers—some of the classics!), but with great variety, from furnariids and small flycatchers to Rufous-rumped Antwrens and Gray-mantled Wrens. Great views of a male Golden-collared Honeycreeper, Blue-browed Tanagers, and Versicolored Barbets stood out. We called in a Striolated Puffbird—recently split as Western Striolated-Puffbird by Field Guides’ own Bret Whitney et al.—near Aguas Verdes, and had Yellow-crested Tanagers near the bridge.



We made various stops for cultural events and loved finding a new, modern rest room and an official sign designating the locality of the tire-fix place as a point of bird conservation! (Photo by guide Richard Webster)



We had beautiful studies of Rufous-tailed Tyrants in the Garcia section. (Photo by guide Marcelo Padua)

A festive welcoming at Morro La Calzada was complete with tea and a lovely variety of foods cooked by local volunteers. We visited with the mayor, who seemed very supportive of furthering ecotourism on the northern circuit, especially to this wonderful park, protecting the forests and savannas surrounding an isolated uplift in a now rather flat environment. A brief birding stop in the savanna/gallery woodland below the Morro added a chunk of new species to our list.

And then we were off to Moyobamba and the Waqanki hummingbird feeders—another alluring problem that no doubt kept us too long. But it contributed great views (and photos!) of multiple hummers, including our only Wire-crested Thorntail and fighting Rufous-crested Coquettes—one of the highlights of the whole trip. After a stop at a bridge over a narrow gorge to view the numerous Oilbirds below, we headed for Tarapoto and the Hotel Las Palmeras—the second of a chain of very comfortable hotels in northern Peru that were helping to sponsor the Rally. Tropical Screech-Owls were calling as we checked into our rooms. Of the hundreds of species possible on this day, we had recorded a fair chunk, but we had missed many too; it was the kind of a day in which a single flock could make the difference between winning or losing the competition.



Sulphur-bellied Tyrant-Manakin (by Rose Ann Rowlett) and (Huallaga) Northern Slaty-Antshrike (by Marcelo Padua) at Upaquihua

Day 7 was particularly exciting for Richard and me, as we had never birded the Tarapoto area before. We headed straight to Upaquihua, a fascinating mix of habitats in the Rio Huallaga drainage, with elements of lowland Amazonia mixed with Pantanal-like habitats and birds. Birding along the road and trails through the biggest remaining patch of contiguous habitat, we enjoyed a fascinating mix of species—from the Huallaga form of Northern Slaty-Antshrike, Stripe-chested Antwren, Sulphur-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, Ashy-headed Greenlet, and Rusty-backed Antwren, to Amazonian trogons, motmots, and jacamars. After a full morning at Upaquihua, we headed for Lago Lindo for lunch at the hotel. Of course, there were a few stops along the way—one overlooking the muddy Rio Huallaga, where we picked up Pied Lapwings, Collared Plovers, Yellow-billed Terns, and Sand-colored Nighthawks on river sandbars; and one to take the ferry across.



After birding along the river, we took a ferry across the Rio Huallaga en route to Lago Lindo. (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

After a late lunch at the Hotel Lago Lindo—in a lovely setting overlooking a lake with Hoatzins—we would bird back out the entrance road, where the forest surrounding the plantations was more typical of lowland Amazonian rainforest. In addition to a number of common species, we managed to call in a notoriously difficult Chestnut-headed Crake, a Golden-collared Toucanet, and a handsome Broad-billed Motmot. What had started out as drizzly turned into a beautiful late afternoon, the sun illuminating the hilly forest, a rainbow overhead. We stood along the road, with all our scopes, enjoying whatever popped up, from Black and Red-throated caracaras to Channel-billed Toucans, Olive Oropendola, and Amazon Kingfisher. The close of the day brought calling Common Pauriques, Common Potoo, and Tawny-bellied Screech-Owl. When the results were announced, we were at 538 species, now 20 behind the lead (and 46 ahead of the third-place total).



Birding Amazonian forest edge from the Lago Lindo entrance road (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

Day 8 began with a Spectacled Owl calling outside our cabin; it was good to have had a teammate sharing my bed! After breakfast we were off to the Escalera, known to birders as the Tunnel north of Tarapoto. Another new birding area for all but Fernando!



Forested road approaching the Escalera tunnel (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

Today we had but the morning to spend, as lists were due in Taropoto at 1:30. We had a lovely morning of birding. Highlight birds in the foothill forest here were our lifer Dotted Tanagers and incredible views of a singing Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo, its green iris glowing in the sun. Our last stop before returning was at the feeders beyond the tunnel, where we enjoyed terrific hospitality and terrific views of multiple hummers, outstanding among them the scarce Koepcke's Hermit and the dazzling Gould's Jewelfront. We had the afternoon to proof our list and prepare for the closing ceremonies.



We were blown away by the emerald iris of this Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo. (Photo by guide Marcelo Padua)

SHARE THIS!

World Birding Rally, Peru: May 2014 first reports

May 19th, 2014 by Field Guides

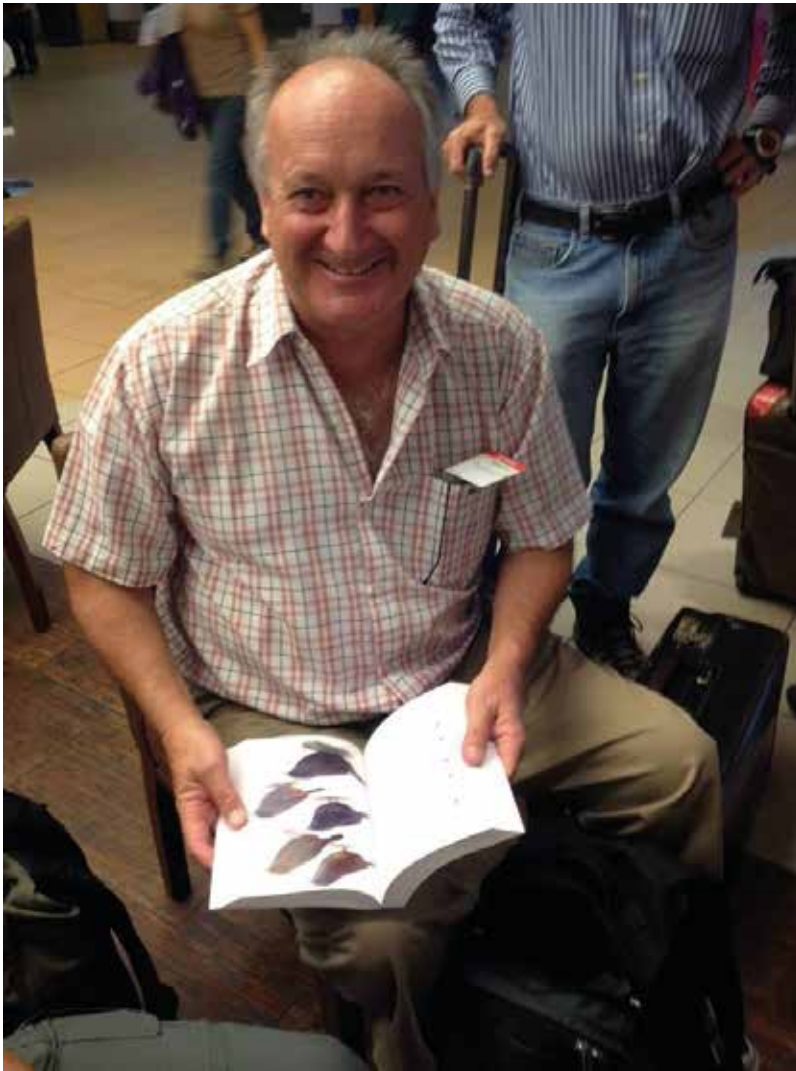
The Rally is in full swing, and guides Rose Ann Rowlett, Richard Webster, Terry Stevenson, and Marcelo Padua are hard at work trying to find as many species as possible during their week traversing northern Peru. Marcelo's reporting from the field when he has a chance (and an internet connection!)



Our Field Guides team getting ready to go, with their own official vehicle! From left to right: Richard Webster, Rose Ann Rowlett, Marcelo Padua, and Terry Stevenson. Onward!!



On the first day of the tour our team found 118 species, but the true highlight of the first day was a group of children cheering for us in one of the villages we visited. – Marcelo



Terry Stevenson is our Africa specialist and holds the world record for the largest number of birds seen in one day, but up to this point he had only spent 3 days in South America, so studying for the Birding Rally has been quite a challenge! On this photo he studies a plate of Tapaculos, a new family for him. –Marcelo

during the drive (as always!), we descended along the lovely Utcubamba River as it started to rain. We caught up with and passed most of the other teams at Hacienda Chillo, where they were searching for a stakeout pair of roosting Koepcke's Screech-Owls. We made the compulsory stop to tour the newly opened Casa Andina Achamaqui hotel (with Terry spotting our first Oriole Blackbirds on the way in) and then headed for Huembo, the Marvelous Spatuletail Interpretation Center, to be followed by some birding en route to Pomacochas. But the rain became heavier and heavier, in an area that had already had unusually heavy rains, and suddenly we came to an active mudslide across the road; small boulders were buried in the mud and still sliding downslope. Traffic was starting to accumulate on the other side, and we were told heavy equipment had been beckoned to clear the road eventually. At least the rain was letting up. So we backtracked to a side road, where we could climb the arid slopes of the Utcubamba Valley and go birding. We fished for Marañon Crescentchest in the first prime-looking habitat, and Marcelo spotted one sneaking in; a pair then responded well, allowing photos and one of our unexpected highlights of the trip.



Active mudslide, with more rain to come (Photo by guide Richard Webster)



Another day three highlight was this spiffy looking pair of Rufous-eared Brushfinches! –Marcelo (with Rose Ann, Richard, and Terry)