

Peru - Spectacled Bears & Andean Condors

Naturetrek Tour Report

28 September - 11 October 2014



Andean Condor



Andean Hillstar



Group Chaparri Lodge

Report compiled by Jose Antonio Padilla
Images courtesy of Marion Jetton



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Leader: Jose Antonio Padilla Naturalist

Participants: Paddy Gallagher
Marion Jetton
Margaret Regnault
Cedric Prys-Roberts

Day 1

Tuesday 30th September

Most of the group members arrived at Lima Airport on different flights. We met Jose, our guide, and Cedric who was already in Lima having been on another Naturetrek trip in Peru.

The tour covers two areas in Peru; the Colca Canyon in the south and Chaparri private protected area in the north. The main targets species for this trip were Andean Condor and Spectacled Bear. We looked forward to searching for them as these places are probably the best in South America to find these elusive creatures.

We spent the night at the Ramada Hotel at Lima Airport as we had a flight very early the next morning.

Day 2

Wednesday 1st October

After an early breakfast we took a flight to Arequipa, located at 2,400 metres and the third largest city in Peru which is surrounded by the beautiful Misty Volcano and the Chacani Mountains. It was a very clear morning so the views were just spectacular. We met Pedro, our local guide and headed to our hotel.

In the afternoon we visited the famous Santa Catalina Convent which was built during colonial times and is still used by nuns. We then returned to the hotel. Wildlife sightings were inevitably few on this essentially urban day but we still managed to find birds including Oasis Hummingbird visiting the flowers in the hotel courtyard, little Croaking Ground Doves and a few Chiguanco Thrushes.

Today's birds list:

Turkey Vulture	Eared Dove	Croaking Ground Dove
Oasis Hummingbird	Blue and White Swallow	Chiguanco Thrush
Rufous Collared Sparrow	Rock Dove	

Day 3

Thursday 2nd October

Today we went to see more of the city before heading to the Colca Canyon. We visited the Cathedral and the San Francisco Convent and Church before lunch, then afterwards we packed and started our journey to the Canyon. On the way we stopped at a nice district called Yanahuara and here we had the best views of Misty Volcano and the city of Arequipa. Once we had left the city we started climbing and passed through the Aguada Salada National Reserve. Here we were able to find some wild Vicuñas, a South American camel that now is endangered. We had excellent views and better pictures.

The weather suddenly changed as snow and rain began to fall making the views very spectacular, but nobody got out of the vehicle at the lookout points or at the pass! We went straight to our hotel in Chivay, the first town in the Colca Valley. We had to be careful due to the high altitude of over 3,800 metres, so a light dinner was a must and an early sleep was important to be ready for the next day.

Despite the weather we saw some good quality Andean birds today:

Andean Goose	Andean Coot	Andean Gull
Common Miner	White-winged Cinclodes	Black-throated Flowerpiercer

Day 4

Friday 3rd October

Today was one of the big days of the tour as we went to look for Andean Condor. In Peru there are only 300–500 left in the wild. The Andean Condor is the largest flying bird in the world with a wingspan of about three metres. They occur in the Andes mountains and sometimes come down to the coast to nest. They are carrion feeders and considered as a God by the Inca people. The Colca Canyon is by far the best place in South America to see Andean Condor close enough for great pictures.

We arrive at Cruz del Condor, the lookout point, and found two young ones perched on some close rocks - just amazing! What a start. We watched them for over an hour before they took off. We kept watching them for another hour or so flying on the thermals. What fantastic views. In all we had about eight condors flying overhead.

After these fantastic view of condors we went for a walk on the mountain above the canyon and saw some more Andean birds including Mourning Sierra Finches, the endemic Black-necked Woodpecker, Creamy-crested Canastero, Andean Hillstar and Giant Hummingbird.

We returned to Chivay for lunch, after which we birded the grounds of our beautiful hotel.

New birds seen today:

Torrent Duck	Andean Teal	Andean Condor
Black-chested Buzzard Eagle	Variable Hawk	American Kestrel
Aplomado Falcon	Spot-winged Pigeon	Black-winged Ground-Dove
Andean Swift	Sparkling Violetear	Andean Hillstar
Giant Hummingbird	Black-necked Woodpecker*	Andean Flicker
Cordilleran Canastero	Creamy-breasted Canastero	Yellow-billed Tit Tyrant
Rufous-naped Ground Tyrant	White-browed Chat Tyrant	House Wren
Hooded Siskin	Peruvian Sierra Finch	Mourning Sierra Finch
Greenish Yellow-Finch	Band-Tailed Seed eater	

Day 5

Saturday 4th October

Today we had a second visit to see the Andean Condors. There were more individuals flying at eye-level, giving us great photographic opportunities from all different angles. What a great place, highly recommended to come

and visit. We also made a return visit to the same trail we had done the day before to get pictures of some of the hummingbirds.

After the walk we started to head back, but this time making more birding stops than the previous day. We took a different route back to town, driving through Ichupampa, Lari, and Yanque. We travelled along the other side of the Colca River and the views of the countryside were just spectacular! We saw some amazing Andean birds including Andean Tinamou, Silvery Grebe and Black Metaltail.

Today's birds:

Andean Tinamou	Andean Duck	Silvery Grebe
Wilson's Phalarope	Bare-faced Ground-Dove	Golden-Spotted Ground-Dove
Black Metaltail	Streaked Tit Spinetail	Canyon Canastero
Black-billed Shrike Tyrant	Cinereous Conebill	Ash-breasted Sierra Finch
Puna Yellow-Finch		

Day 6

Sunday 5th October

It was time to leave this beautiful valley so after breakfast we headed back to Arequipa. Today the weather was much better than the day we arrived, allowing us to catch up with some of the activities and the birding we had missed on the way. Our first stop was at Patapampa lookout point where we had the most spectacular views of the mountains and volcanos in the area. Then we stopped at Toca Wetlands where Grey-breasted Seedsnipe seemed to be everywhere, and finally we visited Sumbay Caves. The natural caves contain prehistoric petroglyphs and rock art depicting interesting aspects of ancient Peruvian lifestyle and the animals these people used to hunt. It is a place that takes you back in time, and makes you think about the time these people were around. We also found D'Orbigny's Chat Tyrant and an Andean Hillstar feeding here. An excellent stop.

We finally arrived in Arequipa and returned to our hotel to get ready for our next adventure: Northern Peru and the search of our next target - Spectacled Bear, the only bear in South America.

Birds seen today:

Crested Duck	Puna Teal	Puna Ibis
Mountain Caracara	Andean Lapwing	Grey-breasted Seedsnipe
Greater Yellowlegs	Baird's Sandpiper	Chestnut-(Bar)winged Cinclodes
Andean Negrito	Ochre-naped Ground Tyrant	Sand Martin
Giant Coot	Slender-billed Miner	D'Orbigny's Chat Tyrant
Yellow-rumped Siskin		

Day 7

Monday 6th October

Today was a travelling day during which we passed through some lovely countryside. We went from Arequipa back to Lima and then from Lima to Chiclayo where our local guide, Thomas was waiting for us at the airport. He took us about 75kms east to Chaparri Lodge. This is a tourist lodge owned by the local people of Chongoyape, a small town that is now part of this private reserve of Chaparri, a protected area that covers more

than 34,412 ha. and is used for ecotourism, protection of species and some small scale agriculture. It had been a long day so after dinner we retired to bed with anticipation as to what the next day would bring.

Today was mainly travelling, however we did see some new birds including:

Western Cattle Egret

Great Egret

Black Vulture

Day 8

Tuesday 7th October

Today we started looking for our target for this part of the trip, Spectacled Bear. We had information from our local guide that these animals had recently stopped coming to the feeders so we climbed a little way up the mountain to a pathway they were believed still to be using. Knowing that they were no longer coming to the feeders, the task of finding them was going to be much harder. We spent the morning searching without success.

We returned to the lodge and went for some birding and to explore the grounds. We were now in dry forest, a completely new habitat. We saw some new birds together with a number of good mammals including Sechuran Fox, Collared Peccaries and Fraternal Fruit-eating Bats.

Birds seen today:

White-winged Guan

Harris Hawk

West Peruvian Dove

White-tipped Dove

Red-masked Parakeet

Pacific Parrotlet

Amazilia Hummingbird

Scarlet-backed Woodpecker

Golden-olive Woodpecker

Pacific Hornero

Streak-headed Woodcreeper

Collared Antshrike

Southern Beardless Tyrannulet

Grey-and-White Tyrannulet

Tumbes Pewee

Vermilion Flycatcher

Tumbes Tyrant

Baird's Flycatcher

Rufous Flycatcher

White-tailed Jay

Superciliated Wren

Tropical Gnatcatcher

Long-tailed Mockingbird

Tropical Parula

White-edge Oriole

Peruvian Meadowlark

Bananaquit

Tumbes Sparrow

White-headed Brush Finch

Cinereous Finch

Collared Warbling Finch

Sulphur-throated Finch

Golden-bellied Grosbeak

Day 9

Wednesday 8th October

Today we again set out in search of Spectacled Bears. Park Rangers had recently seen bears higher up the Chaparri mountain at a drinking spot so we headed in that direction. The walk was another three hours up a challenging trail used by Rangers rather than tourists. As it got steeper most of the group turned round but one intrepid member carried on and, on reaching the top, was rewarded with seeing a Spectacled Bear.

Back on flat land we had our box lunches before a jubilant Margaret rejoined us and we headed back to the lodge. We then had a free afternoon where some spent the time taking photographs, other just enjoyed Chaparri.

New birds seen today:

Purple-collared Woodstar

Fasciated Wren

Day 10

Thursday 9th October

We started the day with a change of focus. After breakfast we drove to Tinajones Water Reservoir and spent the whole morning there birding and taking photographs. We found King Vultures, considered by some to be the most beautiful vulture in the world. Other sightings included Peruvian Thick-knee, Burrowing Owl and Chilean Flamingo. It was a great way to spend the morning, looking at great birds and at spectacular scenery. We later came across a Green Iguana and a huge Cane Toad.

In the afternoon we went to see Spectacled Bears that are part of a rescue program. There were about six bears in enclosures, some which were soon to be released back into the wild. We had an amazing experience and took some fantastic photographs. The staff and the guides were very helpful, even setting up sweet potatoes and other food for the bears to aid our photographic opportunities. Great views and great pictures! We were all very happy.

New birds seen today:

Blue-winged Teal	Cinnamon Teal	White-cheeked Teal
Least Grebe	Pied-billed Grebe	Chilean Flamingo
Cocoi Heron	Little Blue Heron	Snowy Egret
Neotropic Cormorant	King Vulture	Western Osprey
Savannah Hawk	Common Moorhen	Peruvian Thick-knee
Black-necked Stilt	Collared Plover	Spotted Sandpiper
Grey-hooded Gull	Scarlet-fronted Parakeet	Groove-billed Ani
Burrowing Owl	Tumbes Hummingbird	Short-tailed Woodstar
Necklaced Spinetail	Barn Swallow	House Sparrow
Shiny Cowbird	Saffron Finch	Blue-backed Grassquit
Parrot-billed Seedeater	Dull-colored Grassquit	Streaked Saltator

Day 11

Friday 10th October

Although it was our last day in the north of Peru, we still had lots of things to do before flying back to Lima.

We made an early start and went first to Bosque de Poma, a mesquite forest located north-east of the city. It is another protected area established to protect the second largest dry forest in the world. The forest has a very unique species of tree, the Carob Tree, known in Spanish as the Algarrobos Tree. It was a very interesting habitat and we managed to see some good birds as well as Guayaquil Squirrels. Next we went to a lookout point and saw some adobe pre-Inca constructions. Moving on, we went into the city for lunch before we visited the Museo Tumbas Reales del Señor de Sipan (Museum of the Royal Tombs of Sipan), one of the best museums in the world.

To end our last full day of the trip we went to Pimentel beach and saw a spectacular sunset. Today's scenery had made this a special day. Back in the city we enjoyed a nice dinner and belated celebrations for Marion's birthday.

New birds seen today:

Belcher's (Band-tailed) Gull	Kelp Gull	Pacific Pygmy Owl
Tropical Kingbird	Grey-breasted Martin	Scrub Blackbird

Day 12

Saturday 11th October

Today was our final day of the trip but we still had things to do. After a good breakfast we met Ernesto, our transfer and helper for this final part of the tour. We all drove to the harbour and boarded a boat for a pelagic trip to the Palominos Islands to look for sea birds and other aquatic life. This was our last excursion of the tour and we enjoyed lots of good sightings. We had excellent views of Southern Sea Lions; here is probably the biggest population in this part of the World. It was just amazing! It was a great trip and thanks to the great guides.

Back on the shore, Ernesto was waiting for us. We called at the hotel to use the facilities then he took us to the airport where we said our goodbyes. Sadly this fantastic trip came to an end.

Birds seen on our last excursion:

Peruvian Pelican	Peruvian Booby	Red-legged Cormorant
Guanay Cormorant	Blackish Oystercatcher	American Oystercatcher
Ruddy Turnstone	Surfbird	White-rumped Sandpiper
Grey Gull	Wilson's Storm Petrel	Inca Tern
Humboldt Penguin		

Total bird species seen on the trip: 161

Total mammal species seen on the trip: 11

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