

Tuesday, September 17 – birding around Amazonia Lodge



We bird in the clearing around the lodge beginning at 6:00 am, seeing still more tanagers, flycatchers, euphonias, woodcreepers (*below right*) . . . the list goes on and on. Then breakfast, great fried eggs this morning and they have the same wonderful preserves that we had at K'yuchi Rumi, sort of a cross between blueberry and current. There is no brewed coffee here, or at the last lodge. Lots of teas and you make coffee from a coffee extract they put on the table in a jar. We think it's just instant coffee made into a syrup, but it's fine for the coffee-drinkers needs. Ed has never cared for coffee and Ann is fine with tea. But in Peru coffee is scarce and tea is plentiful, and we've become real tea fanciers since we've been here.

Around 8:30, we head into the forest, just on short trails around the lodge, but we feel that if we did not have a guide or leave bread crumbs (but no, the birds would eat the bread crumbs), we would be totally lost. We can't even BEGIN to describe the heat and humidity. Only a few days ago we wondered if we would



ever warm up again, and now we wonder if we'll ever feel cool. Our clothes are soaked through within minutes. We wear long sleeves, collars and sleeves buttoned up, keep our pant

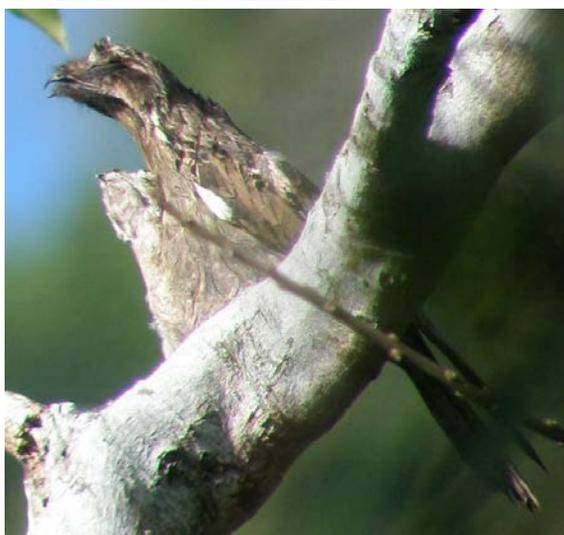


legs tucked in; fully covered to prevent bug bites. Oh and LOTS of insect repellent. Ann's hair is dripping wet and "frizzing" like it has a life of its own. But before we left she did find a resource for sweatbands that work

well. She took one of those camping towels that dry almost instantly and cut and sewed it into headbands. Miraculous. And they wash and dry quickly as well, even in this humidity.

Now we have some of the most boring times of the trip. We are with Donna and Doug who are REAL birders, it is steaming hot, and you have to spend 10, 15 minutes trying to get your binoculars on a bird that is perhaps two inches long and may be black, gray or russet, in dense brush. Doug and Donna persist, Doris persists (where birds are concerned she doesn't acknowledge failure); so we persist too. It's often rewarded; we do get some good sightings of these types of "subtle" birds that most people, even veteran birders, will never see

And we also see many that are brilliant reds, blues, greens and yellows, often combined. This is not the life for Ann, the instant gratification girl. She practices yoga, the mountain pose; tummy in, butt tucked, knees raised, head back. How long can she hold this? Does she really care about the rusty-necked spine-tail (and yes, that's a real bird and we finally spot it) who cares nothing about us? Ann dreams of being back at the lodge and working on her journal, but it will only be as sticky and hot there. Still, we have some wonderful bird sightings this morning. And there are interesting flowers along the trails, and this butterfly on one of the trail-marker posts.



On one of the trails we see a Common Potoo (*left*) with her chick. These are the strangest looking birds. You look right at them and can still hardly believe it's a bird and not a dead, rotten tree-branch. And also a Rufous-vented Ground-cuckoo, an extremely rare bird and hard to sight beside that. Doris said it was only the 2nd one she'd ever seen in her life. They are the "jungle version" of our Roadrunner (also in the cuckoo family). Different coloration, but the same size and mannerisms".

Around 10:30 Ed gives up; he just can't stand the heat and goes back to the Lodge. But he won't escape the heat, only get to lay down or sit on the veranda in it. Well, that gives Ann a second wind because now she has to see all the birds for us both. So, she does endure and she does see more good birds, including the Hoatzin, a pre-historic looking creature with claws on its wings. It often crawls through tree branches instead of flying. Her kind of bird, one you can easily identify without any doubts.

Finally everyone heads back to the lodge for lunch and talk about the morning's birds. We all sit on the veranda watching birds come to the feeders in the yard. Lots of Tanagers of various kinds, and a Gray-necked Wood-rail.

right: Masked Crimson Tanagers, far right: Gray-necked Wood-rail



Ed is rested now and ready to go back out for the afternoon, but then the skies open after a few flashes of lightning and thunder and the rain begins. And goes on . . . and on! It's now 5:45 and still raining, intensely again. The Lodge is built on a flood plain and is partially underwater during the rainy season. We can see high-water marks on a few of the buildings. But the good side of this for us is that these flood plain areas are extremely species-rich environments, and the number of different birds we're seeing confirms that.

We begin to wonder if perhaps the rainy season has come early and whether we'll be leaving this afternoon by boat. But we ARE cool . . . cool at last! Perhaps a bit apprehensive as we have a 7½ hour boat ride to Manu tomorrow and this is enough rain to raise the river level and to set fresh debris afloat. We don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, no one seems clear on that point. We'll find out tomorrow. There's never a dull moment in the



We just sit on the veranda and watch the rain and enjoy the cooling off it brings with it. Ann's kicking back with her Bombay Sapphire and lemonade and wondering about how, when, if, she'll ever catch up on her journal and blog postings. We hope to have some internet at Manu Wildlife Center, our next lodge, but don't know for sure. We do have electricity here, but very primitive, and no internet connection at all. They use short wave radio to be in touch with the world, though who would really want to be in touch. This place is a bit of paradise (we're saying this while we are cool).

As usual, some reading before bed; bless those headlamps. The electric lights here aren't even as bright as the candles we used at Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge. But another early to bed since we must be up and away early for that long boat ride. We don't expect it to be any fun at all, but it's the only way to get to our next destination, Manu Wildlife Center Lodge, which is far, FAR off the beaten path, or ANY path for that matter.