

**MACHU PICCHU, PERU
AND
PARACAS PENINSULA
EXTENSION TO
AMAZON RIVER CRUISE**

JANUARY 28 – FEBRUARY 4, 2007

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DORIS VALENCIA AT MACHU PICCHU

JAVIER IN PARACAS

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MACHU PICCHU, PERU
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Guide: Steve Hilty, with Doris Valencia at Machu Picchu; Javier in Paracas

By Steve Hilty

The combination of birds, scenery, and history is incomparable at Machu Picchu and, as always, it remains impressionable, mysterious, and evocative—the more so, perhaps, because so little is known of the origins of the ruins, and because of the breathtaking location. The ruins of Machu Picchu are indeed one of the world's great travel destinations, but they are, in themselves, just one chapter in a long and fascinating history of human occupation of the Urubamba river valley. The desert and sea life at Paracas provide a remarkable contrast to the high Andes of Machu Picchu and are one more reminder of the tremendous diversity that can be found in Peru.

This trip is a splendid contrast and conclusion to the steamy lowlands and overwhelming biological diversity of Iquitos. Many threads bind our memories; among them were high altitude giddiness (maybe a bit more than giddiness for some), curvy mountain roads, powerful rushing rivers, an abundance of trains (at Aguas Calientes where there always seemed to be an engine coming or going), colorful markets, the high-pitched voices of vendors in braids and hats, bits of bright cloth, majestic ruins, ancient terrace-rimmed valleys, puna lakes shimmering beneath ultraviolet skies, *Usnea*-draped basaltic cliffs, and a sprightly and difficult-to-see pair of Masked Fruiteaters above the Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel.

Lago Huacarpay provided a glimpse of the birdlife of the dry altiplano and high Andean lakes, while the hotel grounds around the Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel were an oasis of birds, flowers, and tranquility, holding at arm's-length, as it were, the hawkers of souvenirs, tourists, noise, and congestion of the little town of Aguas Calientes. The hotel grounds swarmed with birds—hummingbirds of nine species, as well as multicolored tanagers clothed in gaudy patchwork-quilt patterns, warblers skulking in thickets, sprightly little flycatchers flitting to foliage, and several extended sightings of male Andean Cocks-of-the-rock, that omnipresent symbol now adorning every scrap of hotel propaganda.

To start our first, somewhat rainy day at the ruins, what could have been better than the performance of the lovely family of Inca Wrens at Machu Picchu? First observed around Machu Picchu in 1965, the Inca Wren was not collected until 1974 and not described until 1985. Curiously, it seems not to have been present during the years of intensive surveys and collecting following the discovery of Machu Picchu in the first half of the last century, and perhaps did not establish itself there until after the region was largely cleared of forest growth.

This trip concluded with three days at the Paracas Peninsula which is about four hours south of Lima. The coast of Peru has undergone a dramatic transformation in the past two decades or more. Once Peru's west coast was a sandy desert dissected by a few rivers and accompanying gallery woodlands that followed them to the Pacific Ocean. Today much of the four-hour drive southward is an almost endless succession of vegetable gardens, billboards, sprawl, speculation, garish beach resorts, and chicken houses.

Much has changed in recent years and the Peruvian desert is blooming as never before. Habitat for species of birds endemic to Peru's western deserts is disappearing rapidly, although some, such as the sprightly little Slender-billed Finch, which we found in a much degraded patch of mesquite, seem still to survive and even thrive—although as these small patches of forest give way to human-caused development, so too will the finches. Sadly, it seems only a matter of time—and perhaps less than we think.

The following list contains all of the birds seen and heard on our January-February 2007 Machu Picchu and Paracas Peninsula Extension following the Amazon River Cruise.

ITINERARY:

- Jan 28: Delayed flight and mid-day visit to Lago Huacarpay and continuing down the sacred Valley (called Vilcanota Valley at its upper end, Urubamba Valley farther down) to Pisac for a brief visit to the food market, a unfortunate bout of altitude sickness for a couple people, and finally on to Yucay (9000 ft.)
- Jan 29: Travel to Machu Picchu. A rainy day with afternoon clouds and light rain at the ruins.
- Jan 30: Misty morning and birding around hotel and along trail upriver from hotel. Afternoon return to ruins for some; late p.m. visit to hot springs and dusk vigil for Lyre-tailed Nightjar (it didn't appear)
- Jan 31: Beautiful morning (finally) of birding around the hotel with a gorgeous pair of Masked Fruiteaters; afternoon departure (1:20 p.m.) by train to Ollantaytambo followed by short tour of Ollantaytambo (including home visit) and return by van to Cuzco (several stops en route).
- February 1: Morning flight from Cuzco to Lima followed by lunch at hotel Olivar and afternoon drive to Paracas (arrive about 7:15 p.m.).
- February 2: Morning boat trip to Islas Ballestas; mid-day trip to the Paracas National Reserve (lookout tower); afternoon return to national reserve (Bahía Cequi6n) and late p.m. drive to Pisco and beyond (bad road, grim urban sprawl and bridge out a short distance north of town); return to hotel at dusk (7:00 p.m.)
- February 3. Delightful early morning visit to small mesquite (*Prosopis sp.*) woodland south of Pan American highway turnoff to Paracas. Late morning breakfast and return to Lima for conclusion of extension tour.

KEY:

LH - Lago Huacarpay; ca. 3000m
MPPH – Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel area, 2030m+
Lima – Pantanos de Villa Marshes
Paracas – desert and seacoast
SH – Steve Hilty

*(hd) - heard only

Boldface and underlined – rare, uncommon or of special interest

M or MM and F or FF – male(s) or female(s)

LIST OF BIRDS:

Great Grebe, *Podiceps major*, Pantanos de Villa

White-tufted Grebe, *Rollandia rolland*, Lago Huacarpay

Pied-billed Grebe, *Podilymbus podiceps*, Lago Huacarpay; Pantanos de Villa

Humboldt Penguin, *Spheniscus humboldti*, Paracas (>100; many more than a previous low of about 20)

Peruvian Booby, *Sula variegata*, Paracas (hundreds of thousands around Las Islas Ballestas)

Peruvian Pelican, *Pelecanus thagus*, Paracas (several thousand; distal portion of maxilla orange pink)

Neotropical Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*, Paracas and Pantanos de Villa

Guanay Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax bougainvillii*, Paracas (hundreds of thousands around Las Islas Ballestas)

Red-legged Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax*, singles and pairs on Paracas boat trip; 8+ Islas Ballestas

Andean Duck, *Oxyura ferruginea*,

Torrent Duck, *Merganetta armata*, 12-15 seen including several MM and MM in scope

Speckled Teal, *Anas flavirostris*, Lago Huacarpay and Río Urubamba

Puna Teal, *Anas puna*, Lago Huacarpay

White-cheeked Pintail, *Anas bahamensis*, 1F with 9 downy ducklings at Pantanos de Villa (SH only)

Cinnamon Teal, *Anas cyanoptera*, Lago Huacarpay; 1F near Pisco

Great Egret, *Egretta alba*, 2 Lago Huacarpay; 5-10 daily Paracas

Little Blue Heron, *Egretta caerulea*, Lago Huacarpay; Paracas

Snowy Egret, *Egretta thula*, 2 Lago Huacarpay; 20+ Paracas; also Pantanos de Villa

Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis*, 6+ Lago Huacarpay; many Pantanos de Villa; a few near Paracas

Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, 2 at Pisco; 1 at Hotel Paracas boat dock

Fasciated Tiger-Heron, *Tigrisoma fasciatum*, 1 along Río Urubamba (Phil only)

Puna Ibis, *Plegadis ridgwayi*, Pantanos de Villa (3)

Black Vulture, *Coragyps atratus*, over Aguas Calientes

Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*, several near Paracas (solid red head)

Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*, Paracas bay

Roadside Hawk, *Buteo magnirostris*, 1 seen only by guide Doris Valencia

American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*, Lago Huacarpay; en route to Cuzco; Paracas

Wood quail sp. (prob Stripe-faced), *Odontophorus ballivani*, hd calling at dawn near MPPH by SH

Plumbeous Rail, *Pardirallus sanguinolentus*, hd at Lago Huacarpay (seen previously near Lima)

Common Gallinule (Moorhen), *Gallinula chloropus*, 12+ Lago Huacarpay; 1 Pisco; Pantanos de Villa

Andean Coot, *Fulica ardesiaca*, >150 at Lago Huacarpay; also Pantanos de Villa

Peruvian Thick-Knee, *Burhinus superciliaris*, 8-10 in beach village of Villa (ENDEMIC)

Semipalmated Plover, *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Paracas; 250 to 300 at Cequi6n Bay Paracas

Killdeer, *Charadrius vociferous*, 4-5 at Paracas (north of Pisco)

Snowy Plover, *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Paracas; 6-8 including 1 in full breeding plumage

Blackish Oystercatcher, *Haematopus ater*, Paracas; 2 on rocky shores

American Oystercatcher, *Haematopus palliatus*, Paracas; several pairs

Black-necked Stilt, *Himantopus mexicanus*, a few dozen at Paracas; Pantanos de Villa

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*, 1 or 2 at Paracas Boat Dock; 1 at Bahía Cequi6n; boreal migrant

Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*, 40-50 around Paracas boat dock etc; boreal migrant
 Greater Yellowlegs, *Tringa melanoleuca*, 2 Lago Huacarpay; 2-4 at Paracas; boreal migrant

Lesser Yellowlegs, *Tringa flavipes*, 2-3 Pantanos de Villa; boreal migrant
 Solitary Sandpiper, *Tringa solitaria*, 1 flushed from irrigation ditch at km 89; boreal migrant

Spotted Sandpiper, *Actitis macularius*, 2-3 at Paracas boat dock; boreal migrant
 Sanderling, *Calidris alba*, 10+ Paracas boat dock; 50+ Bahía Cequi6n; boreal migrant
 Semipalmated Sandpiper, *Calidris pusilla*, >50-75 Paracas boat dock; 20+ at Bahía Cequi6n; 10+ Pisco; boreal migrant but some remain all year

Least Sandpiper, *Calidris minutilla*, 1 north of Pisco; scarce boreal migrant here
 Western Sandpiper, *Calidris*, 150+ at Bahía Cequi6n; 1-2 near Paracas boat dock; 100s of distant peeps too far to identify; boreal migrant

Andean Gull, *Larus serranus*, <12 at Lago Huacarpay; <12 along Rí0 Urubamba
 Band-tailed Gull, *Larus belcheri*, common; thousands at Paracas; 100s at Pantanos de Villa

Gray Gull, *Larus modestus*, least numerous gull; a few dozen at Paracas & Pantanos de Villa

Kelp Gull, *Larus dominicanus*; 100+ at Paracas
 Gray-headed (hooded) Gull, *Larus cirrocephalus*; a few 100 at Paracas; a few dozen at Pantanos

Franklin's Gull, *Larus pipixcan*, **several tens of thousands** at Paracas; also est 10,000+ at Pantanos de Villa; boreal migrant

Royal Tern, *Thalasseus maximus*, >250 seen; slightly less numerous at Paracas than Royal Tern

Elegant Tern, *Thalasseus elegans*, >300 seen; somewhat more numerous at Paracas than Royal Tern

Sandwich Tern, *Thalasseus sandvicensis*, common at Paracas perhaps a few 100 seen
 Inca Tern, *Larosterna inca*, >1000 on Islas Ballestas

Peruvian Tern, *Sterna lorata*, minimum 24 at Bahía Cequi6n (splashing for fish and flying off across desert with their catch presumably to nests inland in desert); scarce and local

Black Skimmer, *Rynchops niger*, pair skimming near Hotel Paracas boat dock at dawn
 Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon), *Columba livia*, in all settled areas

Spot-winged Pigeon, *Columba maculosa*, 2 in flight near Lago Huacarpay
 Croaking Ground-Dove, *Columbiana cruziana*, common Paracas and Pantanos de Villa
 Pacific (Peruvian White-winged) Dove, *Zenaida meloda*, Paracas Hotel; etc
 Eared Dove, *Zenaida auriculata*, all open areas including Lago Huacarpay; Paracas etc
 White-tipped Dove, *Leptotila verreauxi*, 2 at MPPH

White-throated Quail-Dove, *Geotrygon frenata*, 1 MPPH (seen by Phil and Steve)
 Pacific Parrotlet, *Forpus coelestis*, 3 flushed from roadside trees at km 89 (introduced here)

Mitred Parakeet, *Aratinga mitrata*, flock of 25+ along lower edge of Machu Picchu ruins
 *Speckle-faced (Plum-crowned) Parrot, *Pionus tumultuosus*, 1 hd flying over MPPH by SH

Groove-billed Ani, *Crotophaga sulcirostris*, scattered individuals Lima to Paracas

Burrowing Owl, *Athene cunicularia*, 1 Pisco
 Amazilia Hummingbird, *Amazilia amazilia*, 1 seen in flight at km 89
 Green Violetear, *Colibri thalassinus*, 5-7 at MPPH
 Sparkling Violetear, *Colibri coruscans*, 2 Lago Huacarpay; 1 MPPH
 White-bellied Hummingbird, *Amazilia chionogaster*, 1 Ollantaytambo
 Green-and-white Hummingbird, *Amazilia viridicauda*, 20-30 MMPPH (ENDEMIC)
 Speckled Hummingbird, *Adelomyia melanogenys*, 2-3 MPPH
 Chestnut-breasted Coronet, *Boissonneaua matthewsii*, 20+ MPPH
 Gould's Inca, *Coeligena gouldi*, 4-6 MPPH
 Booted Racket-tail, *Ocreatus underwoodii*, at least 2MM and 1F (prob more)
Bearded Mountaineer, *Oreonympha nobilis*, 1 along and over Río Urubamba
 (ENDEMIC)
 Long-tailed Sylph, *Agelaiocercus kingi*, 2-3MM (curiously we saw no FF)
White-bellied Woodstar, *Chaetocercus mulsant*, 1M with molting throat seen repeatedly
 MPPH
 Highland Motmot, *Momotus aequatorialis*, 2 seen by SH and Susan
 Golden-olive Woodpecker, *Piculus rubiginosus*, 2 at MPPH
 Coastal Miner, *Geositta peruviana*, several near Paracas (a little ghost bird of the desert)
 Azara's Spinetail, *Synallaxis azarae*, MPPH
 Streaked Xenops, *Xenops rutilans*, MPPH
Andean Cock-of-the-rock, *Rupicola andina*, 1M repeatedly at wild avocado (*Persea sp.*)
 tree; 1-2 other MM on MPPH grounds; unusual to see so many MM here
 White-crested Elaenia, *Elaenia albiceps*, 2+ Lago Huacarpay
 Sierran Elaenia, *Elaenia pallatangae*, 2-3 MPPH (more yellowish than previous sp; no
 white in crown)
 Torrent Tyrannulet, *Serpophaga cinerea*, Aguas Calientes stream (pair)
 Streak-necked Flycatcher, *Mionectes striaticollis*, 1 with mixed spp flock MPPH
 Slaty-capped Flycatcher, *Leptopogon superciliaris*, 1 with mixed spp. flock MPPH (seen
 only by SH)
 Mottle-cheeked Tyrannulet, *Phylloscartes ventralis*, pair with mixed spp. flock MPPH
Sclater's Tyrannulet, *Phyllomyias sclateri*, alone and with mixed spp. flocks MPPH;
 common here
 Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet, *Phyllomyias plumbeiceps*, 2 with mixed spp. flocks
 MPPH
 Cinnamon Flycatcher, *Pyrrhomyias cinnamomea*, 1 or 2 at MPPH
 Vermilion Flycatcher, *Pyrocephalus rubinus*, common in desert mesquite near Paracas
 Black Phoebe, *Sayornis nigricans*, 1 along river by MPPH
Short-tailed Field-Tyrant, *Muscigralla brevicauda*, 1 seen in scope; mesquite patch
 south of Paracas
 White-browed Chat-Tyrant, *Ochthoeca leucophrys*, 1 near Lago Huacarpay
 Golden-crowned Flycatcher, *Myiodynastes chrysocephalus*, MPPH (1 or 2 pairs)
 Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus*, MPPH; also 1 at km 89 in desert south of
 Lima (scarce here)
 *Barred Becard, *Pachyramphus versicolor*, hd on several occasions at MPPH; never seen
 Blue-and-white Swallow, *Notiochelidon cyanoleuca*, MPPH (common); a few over desert
 south of Lima

Brown-bellied Swallow, *Notiochelidon murina*, pair over Río Urubamba (high Andean sp)

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*, 100s over wetland areas near Pisco
 [Yellowish Pipit, *Anthus lutescens*, 1 flushed by Javier near Pisco but no one nearby to see it]

White-capped Dipper, *Cinclus leucocephalus*, Río Urubamba and stream below Aguas Calientes (close view)

Inca Wren, *Thryothorus eisenmanni*, family of 4 at entrance to Machu Picchu ruins

House Wren, *Troglodytes aedon*, all areas including mesquite desert southeast of Paracas

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, *Henicorhina leucophrys*, hd at MPPH (seen only by SH)

Long-tailed Mockingbird, *Mimus longicaudatus*, Lima and “green areas” in desert south to Paracas

*Andean Solitaire, *Myadestes ralloides*, hd along stream below Aguas Calientes; like series of chimes each lower in pitch than the previous

Swainson’s Thrush, *Catharus ustulatus*, 2 hd Jan 30 at MPPH; 2 seen nearby Jan 31

Chiguanco Thrush, *Turdus chiguanco*, dry upper elevations in Urubamba valley and around Cuzco

Brown-capped Vireo, *Vireo leucophrys*, several at MPPH

Red-eyed Vireo, *Vireo olivaceus*, 2 seen at MPPH

Thick-billed Euphonia, *Euphonia laniirostris*, several at MPPH feeders etc

Hooded Siskin, *Carduelis magellanica*, several near Lago Huacarpay; km 89 in Lima desert

Tropical Parula, *Parula pitiayumi*, 1-2 pairs at MPPH

Slate-throated Whitestart, *Myioborus miniatus*, several MPPH

Spectacled Whitestart, *Myioborus melanocephalus*, only 1 pair at MPPH

Russet-crowned Warbler, *Basileuterus coronatus*, several w/mixed spp flocks at MPPH

Cinereous Conebill, *Conirostrum cinereum*, yellowish ones at Paracas; grayer (above) ones at km 89

Capped Conebill, *Conirostrum albifrons*, 2 pair MPPH

Oleagineus Hemispingus, *Hemispingus frontalis*. 1 group of 4 foraging at dead leaves in lower growth

Rust-and-yellow Tanager, *Thlypopsis ruficeps*, pair at entrance to Machu Picchu ruins

*Highland Hepatic-Tanager, *Piranga lutea*, 1 hd at MPPH by SH

Blue-gray Tanager, *Thraupis episcopus*, many around MPPH; are all the dull ones immature (?); are these all young Blue-gray Tanagers (?)

Blue-capped Tanager, *Thraupis cyanocephala*, ruins entrance and above MPPH

Blue-and-yellow Tanager, *Thraupis bonariensis*, several at Laguna Huacarpay (mostly dull FF’s); Yucay

Fawn-breasted Tanager, *Pipraeidae melanonota*, 1 in treetop at MPPH; pair foraging 1-3m up inside forest behind MPPH

Saffron-crowned Tanager, *Tangara xanthocephala*, rather numerous at MPPH (another gorgeous *Tangara*)

Silver-backed Tanager, *Tangara viridicollis*, several at MPPH (elsewhere scarce and local)

Blue-necked Tanager, *Tangara nigricollis*, several in scope at MPPH (beautiful)

Beryl-spangled Tanager, *Tangara nigroviridis*, several in mixed tanager flocks at MPPH

Hooded Siskin, *Carduelis magellanica*

Golden-naped Tanager, *Tangara rufivertex*, 1 seen by Doris and SH at MPPH (less common here)

Blue Dacnis, *Dacnis cayana*, MPPH

Slender-billed Finch, *Xenospingus concolor*, several seen; perhaps a dozen heard in small patch of mesquite south of Paracas; heard calling and singing at dawn; a juvenile bird—brown above, buffy brown below with blurry dusky streaking—accompanied one adult; local and declining desert species

Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch, *Phrygilus plebejus*, only 1 or 2 near Lago Huacarpay

Band-tailed Seedeater, *Catamenia analis*, Lago Huacarpay (a few)

Rufous-collared Sparrow, *Zonotrichia capensis*, abundant in highlands and desert; Paracas etc

Grassland Yellow-Finch, *Sicalis luteola* seen in flight n of Pisco by SH,

Golden-billed Saltator, *Saltator aurantiirostris*, near Lago Huacarpay

Black-backed Grosbeak, *Pheucticus aureoventris*, 2 flying in front of bus near Ollantaytambo

Yellow-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius thilius*, a few distant and 2 flying close; Lago Huacarpay

Peruvian Red-breasted Meadowlark, *Sturnella bellicose*, 8-10 in wetlands north of Pisco