

The **Central** Peru Birding Route



Junín Grebe © Rob Williams



Central Peru, apart from the coastal area near Lima, is the least visited area of Peru by birders despite having some wonderful endemic birds and spectacular scenery. The altitude and topography present challenges but for those with time and energy the birding rewards are great.



Peruvian Thick-knee © Rob Williams



Cactus Canastero © Rob Williams

COAST

Along the coast the rich coastal waters of the Humboldt Current teem with marine life in contrast to the desert onshore. The small fishing port of **Pucusana** is a good spot to see most of the speciality seabirds that breed locally. Local fishermen offer boat trips around the island where one can see Guanay Cormorant, Red-legged Cormorant, Peruvian Pelican, Humboldt Penguin, Inca Tern, Blackish Oystercatcher and Surf Cinclodes. **Pantanos de Villa Wildlife Refuge** is located in the southern outskirts of Lima. It protects an area of freshwater marshes with reedbeds and open water. Highlights here include Great Grebe, White-tufted Grebe, Many-colored Rush Tyrant and Wren-like Rushbird. The beach and coastal lagoon attract many waders, gulls and terns and offshore seabirds including Humboldt Penguin and Peruvian Diving-Petrel can be seen with luck. The port of **Callao**, north of Lima, is the starting point for boat trips to the Palomino and Cabinzas islands, which are part of the **Sistema de islas, islotes y puntas guaneras National Reserve**. These islands are home to large colonies of seabirds including: Guanay Cormorant, Red-legged Cormorant, Peruvian Pelican, Humboldt Penguin, Peruvian Booby and Inca Tern. Peruvian Diving-Petrel and Elliot's Storm-Petrel can be seen en route to the islands with luck.

Inland coastal hills, known as Lomas, receive precipitation from cloud-drip, which allows a unique vegetation to develop which in turn supports a few specialised birds. **The Lachay National Reserve** (5,070 ha) protects such an area. The vegetation changes dramatically with the weather, dry in summer (December to May) and green in the winter (June to November). Accessed from km 105 on the Pan-American highway north of Lima. The access road passes through good habitat for Least Seedsnipe, Tawny-throated Dotterel, Coastal Miner and Burrowing Owl. A few trees near the entrance building often have Oasis Hummingbird. The trails give the opportunity to find Andean Tinamou, Mountain Parakeets, Thick-billed Miner, Collared Warbling-Finch and with luck Raimondi's Yellow-Finch. Quebrada Guayabito (accessed from the north east) is drier and home to the endemic Cactus Canastero and Greyish Miner.



Aca el Zarcillo - Inca Tern © Rob Williams

WEST SLOPE

The Andes rise steeply from the coastal plain and a series of different vegetations are found along the altitudinal gradient. There are few roads accessing these areas and these provide birding access. The best area is the **Santa Eulalia** valley, a side road from the central highway running in a parallel valley. The lower valley is dominated by agricultural areas, steep barren hillsides and areas of scrub. The mid valley is more scrubby and there are areas where the cooler more humid vegetation allows dry woodland to develop. At the highest elevations there are areas of *Polylepis* forest and puna grasslands. The birds change across this altitudinal gradient. The lower areas support species such as Scarlet-fronted and Mountain Parakeets, Oasis Hummingbird, Peruvian Sheartail and Black-necked Woodpecker. The barren slopes have Great Inca-Finch and Thick-billed Miner and the dry forest scrub is good for Bronze-tailed Comet, Rusty-bellied Brush-Finch and the rare Rufous-breasted Warbling-Finch. The *Polylepis* forest patches in the upper



Peruvian Sheartail © Alejandro Tello / PROMPERÚ



White-cheeked Cotinga © Rob Williams

valley are a good site for the scarce White-cheeked Cotinga, which is best looked for just as the sun hits the trees in the morning. The **Bosque de Zarate Reserved Zone** is a good alternative site for the *Polylepis* forest birds found in Santa Eulalia but requires a demanding hike to reach the forest and probably camping.

HIGHLANDS

The Santa Eulalia road ascends to **Marcapomacocha** and rejoins the central highway at **Ticlio**. At these highest elevations there are a series of peat bogs, *bofedales*, which are home to the critically endangered White-bellied Cinclodes and the sought-after Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. Lakes and pools in the area often have Giant Coot and the grasslands also have Dark-winged Miner, a variety of ground-tyrants and Olivaceous Thornbill. **Lake Junin**, part of the Junin National Reserve, is a must-visit site for any serious birder. Two endemic species: the critically threatened Junin Grebe and the endangered Black Rail are only found here. The grebe is only easily found on a boat trip as it inhabits deeper waters far from shore, and the rail is best found with a local guide in the sedge and reed beds around the lake. The area holds a good variety of other waterfowl. The road north from Junin to Huanuco passes through some interesting habitats, including an area of *Polylepis* forest and dry montane scrub where the shy Rufous-backed Inca-Finch can be found.



Black Rail © Rob Williams

HUANUCO AREA

Above the town of Huanuco the Carpish mountains are a key birding area. The **Bosque de Unchog** is an area of *Polylepis* and elfin forest patches interspersed with grasslands. Improved roads mean this can now be reached as a day trip from Huanuco. Highlights here include Golden-backed Mountain-Tanager, Pardusco, and Rufous-browed Hemispingus in the forest patches, whilst Jameson's Snipe can be found at the forest edge. The main highway passes through the **Carpish tunnel** and here a side trail offers good montane birding with Chestnut Antpitta, Unstreaked Tit-Tyrant and Tschudi's Tapaculo. A few km further down the road the **Paty trail** offers good birding with Bay Antpitta, Masked Fruiteater and Masked Saltator amongst the highlights.



Rufous-browed Hemispingus © Rob Williams

EASTERN LOWLANDS

The road continues to the east Andean foothills and Amazonian lowlands. **Tingo Maria National Park** has a famous cave that holds a large colony of Oilbirds. The park includes more than 364 bird species, among which, we find the Andean Cock-of-the-rock, parrots, woodpeckers and toucans. The road ends at the town of Pucallpa and just to the north the lake of **Yarinacocha** offers the chance for Amazonian waterbirds and is one of the only Peruvian



Golden-headed Quetzal © Ernesto Benauides / PROMPERÚ

sites for Rusty-backed Spinetail. Pucallpa is also a good starting point to explore remoter areas of central Amazonian Peru including Cerros de Sira where there are three endemic species. The area around **Oxapampa** is another good area for lowland and foothill species with highlights including: Rufous-webbed Brilliant, Cloud-forest screech-Owl and Bay Antpitta. Main birding areas here include the Bosque de Scho'llet, Ulcumano Lodge and the antenna road.

SATIPO ROAD

The **Satipo road** drops from the highlands north of Huancayo to the town of Satipo in the eastern lowlands. The road descends through different habitats and offers access to many special and endemic birds. The upper road around



Eye-ringed Thistletail © Rob Williams

Puente Carrizales is dominated by stunted forest and bamboo patches where Fire-throated Metaltail, Junin Tapaculo and Eye-ringed Thistletail can all be found. The side valley towards **Andamarca** is the best place to find Black-spectacled Brushfinch and the as yet undescribed Mantaro Thornbird and Mantaro Wren. Further down the mid-elevation forests hold a good variety of montane forest birds including Blue-banded Toucanet and Unstreaked Tit-Tyrant. The road continues to the tropical lowlands near Satipo.

CORDILLERA BLANCA

The impressive mountains of the Cordillera Blanca are one of Peru's most spectacular mountain ranges and provide many birds of interest. The lake of **Conococha** where the highway up the west side of the Cordillera leaves the



Giant Coot © Rob Williams

coast road, is a great spot for a good variety of Andean waterfowl and shorebirds. The main birding areas are best accessed from the town of Yungay. The **Llanganuco valley** with its famous glacial lakes form part of the Huascarán National Park. The *Polylepis* forest here and over the pass at **Abra Portachuelo** area the best areas to search for the scarce White-cheeked Cotinga, Ancash Tapaculo, Rufous-eared Brushfinch, Ash-breasted Tit-Tyrant, Giant Conebill and Plain-tailed Warbling Finch. Near the village of **Pueblo Libre** the dry scrub is home to the northern population of Creamy-breasted Canastero and the **road to Huaylas** passes through dry scrub where both Rufous-backed and Great Inca-Finches can be found.





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The Central Peru Birding Route



Birding sites

COAST

- Pucusana** • 0 m
• -12.482667, -76.797083 • Rocky coast, marine.
- Lima** • 50 m
• -12.102778, -77.035278 • Urban parks, coast, marine.
- Pantanos de Villa** • 0 m
• -12.211028, -76.989278 • Wetlands, beach and marine.
- Callao** • 0 m
• -12.067611, -77.166611 • Rocky coast, marine.
- Lachay NR** • 100-500 m
• -11.373361, -77.360833 • Lomas, desert.

WEST SLOPE

- Lower Santa Eulalia valley** • 1,100-2,200 m
• -11.841333, -76.631194 • Arid scrub, agricultural areas.
- Mid Santa Eulalia valley** • 2,300-3,000 m
• -11.739917, -76.610056 • Montane scrub, Polylepis forest, grassland.
- Upper Santa Eulalia Valley** • 3,850 m
• -11.626250, -76.436056 • Polylepis forest, grasslands.
- Bosque de Zarate** • 2,800-3,500 m
• -11.931028, -76.475500 • Polylepis forest.

HIGHLANDS

- Marcopomacocha and Tlicio** • 4,750 m
• -11.577667, -76.266361 • Peat bogs, grasslands.
- Junin NR: Lake Junin** • 4,205 m
• -10.964806, -76.229500 • Lake, reedbeds, wetlands, grassland.
- Road from Junin to Huanuco** • 3,650 m
• -10.615083, -76.179556 • Polylepis forest, montane scrub.

HUANUCO AREA

- Carpish Tunnel** • 2,700 m
• -9.719806, -76.099000 • Montane forest.
- Paty Trail** • 2,000-2,450 m
• -9.695167, -76.086750 • Montane forest.
- Bosque Unchog** • 3,600 m
• -9.737306, -76.169833 • Grassland, Polylepis forest, elfin forest.

EASTERN LOWLANDS

- Tingo María NP: Oilbird Cave** • 800 m
• -9.330083, -76.027806 • Cave, lower montane forest.
- Pucallpa and Yarinacocha** • 150 m
• -8.310694, -74.569028 • Secondary lowland habitats, lake.
- Ulcumano and Oxapampa** • 2,350 m
• -10.621944, -75.425472 • Lower montane forest.

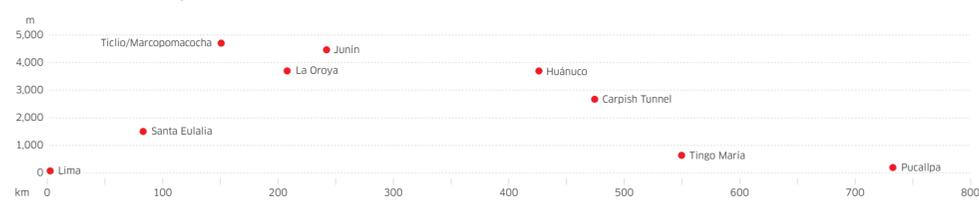
SATIPO ROAD

- Puente Carrizales and upper road** • 2,700 m
• -11.509306, -74.859972 • Upper montane forest with bamboo.
- Valle Andamarca** • 2,420 m
• -11.706694, -74.803500 • Forest fragments and agriculture.
- Apaya-Mariposa area** • 1,375 m
• -11.433722, -74.770194 • Lower montane forest.
- Lower Satipo road** • 650-1,000 m
• -11.338139, -74.736111 • Secondary forest and agriculture.

CORDILLERA BLANCA

- Conococha** • 4,025 m
• -10.126056, -77.285222 • Andean lake, grassland.
- Llanganuco valley and lakes** • 3,840 m
• -9.074472, -77.644833 • Andean Lake, wetlands, Polylepis forest.
- Abra Portachuelo** • 4,200 m
• -9.045250, -77.565472 • Polylepis forest.
- Pueblo Libre** • 2,400 m
• -9.077944, -77.799833 • Arid scrub and fields.
- Huaylas Road** • 2,850 m
• -8.876667, -77.872639 • Arid montane scrub.

Route Lima - Pucallpa altitudes



Route La Oroya - Satipo altitudes



LEGEND

- International boundary
- Departmental boundary
- Capital of department
- Provincial capital
- District capital
- Village
- Airport
- Birding route
- Secondary birding routes
- Protected areas



GRAPHIC SCALE (KM)



Saffron-crowned Tanager © Jeremy Cornejo / PROMPERÚ

Blue-naped Chlorophonia © Jeremy Cornejo

White-bellied Cincaloes © Rob Williams

Military Macaw © Ernesto Benauides / PROMPERÚ