The Central Peru Birding Route

The Central Peru circuit can be also called the “Route of Contrasts”. Starting in the coastal desert of Lomas de Lachay, a unique formation of vegetation that depends on water supplied entirely by mist clouds rolling in from the ocean 5 miles away and hitting the hillsides at 490 - 2,300 feet elevation. The site is 65 miles north of Lima and provides good birding in some of the best Polylepis woodlands.

There are only about 55 bird species here, what makes it a good introduction to Peruvian birding. Some specialties and four endemics that are difficult to see elsewhere (Tie-Necked Miner, Greyish Miner, Raimondi’s Yellow-Finch and Cactus Canastero).

**Pantanos de Villa**

The Pantanos de Villa is a small protected marsh (978 acres) within the city limits of Lima, despite its proximity to the city, the site supports most of the coastal marsh species found in Peru and was declared a Ramsar Site (a Wetland of International Importance) in 1997. More than 130 bird species have been recorded here and typically more than 50 species can be seen on a single visit. It is an excellent place to spend a morning or afternoon in Lima and makes a good introduction to Peruvian birds. There are marked trails with observation towers, a paddle boat circuit and a trekking trail (1 hour). Depending on time, try them all. To find Peruvian Thick-Knee, ask the park guard where they have been seen in the last days.

**Lomas de Lachay**

Lomas de Lachay is a “mist oasis”, a unique formation of vegetation that depends on water supplied entirely by mist clouds rolling in from the ocean 5 miles away and hitting the hillsides at 490 - 2,300 feet elevation. The site is 65 miles north of Lima and 27 miles south of the city of Huaraz. Lomas de Lachay National Reserve protects coastal miner (Asthenes cactorum) Cactus canastero, and Raimondi’s Yellow-Finch. The site is 65 miles north of Lima and 27 miles south of the city of Huaraz. Lomas de Lachay National Reserve protects coastal miner (Asthenes cactorum) Cactus canastero, and Raimondi’s Yellow-Finch.

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Central Highway:
Paralleling the Santa Elena road is this main paved road that connects Lima to Amazonia. The birds in this section are similar to those described for Santa Elena, although the Central Highway is not as isolated as the Santa Elena. You will have little habitat and stopping may be difficult because of the heavy traffic. Try to stop in the same habitats as recommended for Santa Elena.

One spot worth checking is reached from the exit at mile 33 in Concha Rica. Turn left on the road to Santiago de Tuna. You take some through some nice scrub habitat as the road quickly gains elevation. Maybe a better place to stop is at Santa Elena. Drive from the road at Ticlio or Abra de Anticona (mile 82; 15 807 feet elevation) along the way. Look for high Puna bunch grass close to the road. Other interesting birds here are Rufous-webbed Wren and Trilling Tapaculo, then descends steeply for 3 days with plenty of new species every day.

PASCO LOWLANDS:
If you continue descending from Tarma you will make it to this region. The lowlands of Tarma were the first tropical forests to be settled, and exploited in Peru because of their proximity to Lima. Since most of the lowlands of Tarma is used for cattle and coffee plantations, with very little pristine forest left, it may not seem like an ideal birding destination. However, there is still a good array of unique species and the Pasco lowlands are inhabited by numerous endemics and some typical birds of the montane evergreen forest which are still found elsewhere. Where else can you guarantee Creamy-bellied Antpittos? Or where else has Lanzonicted Masked Tityras been seen so? The off-road suitability of the area is easily available access from Lima. The Central Highway is paved into most of the montane evergreen forest.

HUANUCO AREA
Continuing from Junin you reach the town of Huanta at 215 feet elevation, a big city that can be easily accessed also from Lima by plane or comfortable bus (252 miles in 6-10 hours). If you own car, you have the option of lodging like Santa Elena and Laguna Junin en route. The city has two good hotels on the Plaza de Armas and many others elsewhere. From Huanta you can go to the Caspian area (1 hour) and La Quiriquina (1.5 hours) by taxi or bus transportation on paved roads. For Huanta you will need a 4-wheel drive vehicle, which you can rent in Huancayo.

Pampa Hermosa:
This area is not as well known. The forest is still relatively intact, the traffic is light, and birding conditions are excellent. The poorly known Eye-ring Tiyanta is easily found at several sites along the road. Punto and Otola is a side trip done most frequently to see the Black-tailed Sunbird.

Laguna Oconal:
A unique fish of Pampa, the Lago Junin is a heart of Central Peru’s coffee-growing region and is largely surrounded by coffee plantations. There are some patchy remnants of forest left here and there and bird flocks use the mature shade coffee plantations. The ‘shadeflocking’, as it is called, is done mainly to see the Black-footed Antshrike, and sunbathing birds attract an impressive list of songbirds such as the pre-historic Metaltail (one of the best sites for this endemic), Black-browed Antshrike, Amazonian Antshrike, Black-tailed Piping-finch, Purple-throated Mango, and Golden-chevroned Tityra. Open areas are good for Slaty-breasted Finches and many species of grassland birds.

Paracuaro:
Continuing along the road after the ‘Tunnel area’ you will easily find up in Paracuaro, the fastest-growing and somewhat chaotic jungle city with a population of about 200,000 people and most of the amenities. For example, it is not even safe to go out in Paracuaro after dark. The forest is still very good but seems to have been thoroughly searched these days. The forest is still very good but seems to have been thoroughly searched these days. It is possible to find the Cock-of-the-Rock in some areas.”