

PERU 6-21 June 2015

In June of 2015, my friend Jyl and I decided to do a last minute trip to Peru. I had two mammal targets for the trip, the mustached tamarin, which I was hoping to see at one of the Amazonia Expedition lodges outside Iquitos, and the red uakari, at the Tapiche Reserve. This was my third trip to Peru, and the fourth time I had gone into the rainforest in South America to look for wildlife.

6 June – I flew from Virginia to Lima, getting in around 1 am. My friend and I had booked a morning trip to go to the Palomino Islands that are located off the coast of Lima, to do a South American sea lion snorkel trip. I had seen the species before, however had never been in the water with one. This was something I wanted to do the last time I was in Peru, but did not have the time. Unfortunately for me, I would also not be able to go this time as the Peruvian Navy had closed off the Callao Pier that the ship was to leave from due to rough seas.

7 June – no sea lion trip meant my friend and I pretty much slept the morning away and walked around the area our hotel was in. We had booked an afternoon flight to Iquitos, the starting point for all the lodges we would be visiting. Our bad luck continued this day, as our flight was 6 hours late and got us into Iquitos around 2 am. My friend and I had booked a room at the El Dorado Plaza hotel, which included a transfer to the hotel. Because our flight was delayed, to my pure enjoyment the hotel decided it was too late to pick us up, but did not bother to notify us. Trying to negotiate a cab ride at 2 am with my limited Spanish, was also very pleasurable.

8 June – we decided to do the first part of the trip at the Amazonia Lodges. Both lodges are located in the Tamshiyaru-Tahuayo Reserve, about 4.5 hours by speedboat from Iquitos. They are split into the main Tahuayo Lodge and the sister lodge, the Tahuayo Amazon Research Center, which is more remote and set in more pristine rainforest. One of the best things about the lodges is that every separate group that comes in gets its own guide at no extra cost. The guides also take the time to ask the tourists what they want to do (instead of being told) and the expectations they have of the trip. We were linked up with a guide named Weninger, of whom I could pretty much write an entire blog about how amazing his wildlife viewing

skills are. We also had a younger guide named Nixon who helped with rowing our canoes and spotting wildlife. We spent the first few nights at the main lodge after a speedboat trip 50 miles up the Amazon River , and 40 miles up the Tahuayo Tributary. There had been a larger than usual flood in April –May of 2015, which meant the majority of the forest was still flooded which was unusual this time of year. The first afternoon we went into the flooded forest directly behind the main lodge. This area would turn out to be one of my favorite places of the trip. After stopping for multiple birds, our guide pulled up to a tree and told us to look. Staring directly at us, was what was to be my first yellow crowned brush tailed rat staring out at us from a tree hole.



The forests around the reserves are reported to be reliable spots for them, and they are listed as one of the species that you will most likely see. We continued to a large tree where two coppery titi monkeys were sitting and staring at us.



We watched them, then realized they were traveling with a small family group of pygmy marmoset, all of which were too quick for pictures. We went further back into the palm forest and watched a large troop of brown large headed capuchins, some of which were cracking open nuts with a rock. We also watched a lone saddleback tamarin, not far from the capuchins.



The end of the excursion was highlighted by my longest and best southern tamandua sighting I had ever had. It pretty much positioned itself right above us, then just stared at us. After about 25 minutes of being stared at we decided to head off. Weninger told me the reserve also has a good number of the black phase of the tamandua, something I would have loved to have seen.



Our room was right in front of a small lagoon filled with what looked like small sardines. That evening (then every evening) we watched greater fishing bats, repeatedly swooping down for some easy snacks. We went back that evening into the flooded forest behind the lodge and saw two separate species of spiny rat, a YC brush tailed rat walking along a tree and more fishing bats.

We then heard large noises coming from the trees above us. It turned out there were two trees with action, one with a bicolored spiny porcupine which I was told was a common sighting, and the other with two kinkajous. All

three mammals were pretty much on a fast moving mission, however right above our heads, so it was difficult to decide who to watch at times!



9 June – since my friend and I did not have the best views of the pygmy marmosets the day before, Weninger knew of some trees about 10 minutes from the main lodge behind a local's house to look for them. We went first thing in the morning and within 5 minutes we were watching the first of three pygmy marmosets at close range. We were also at close range to the people in their open air house eating breakfast. We ended up watching the family group for about 30 minutes before leaving.

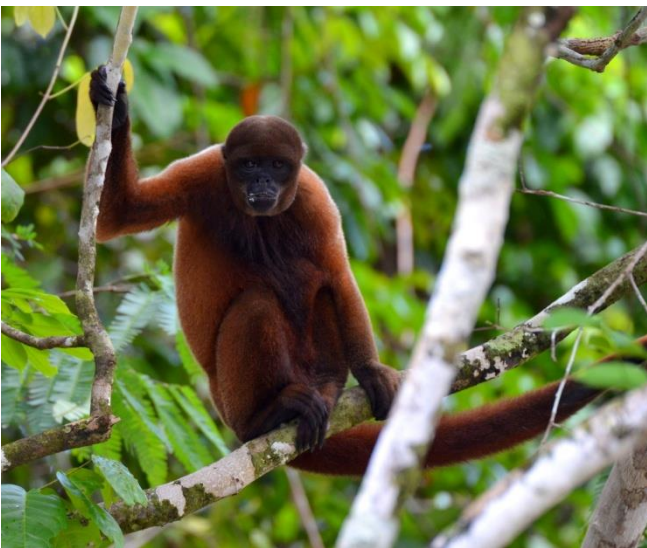




The plan for the day was to go to an area on dry land to look at poison dart frogs in an area they called frog valley. It was also supposedly a good area for the mustached tamarin. After looking at a couple of frogs, we were also taken to a large almond tree that had toppled over, years ago. You were allowed to climb into the tree to look at some of the resident bat species that used it as a day roost. The majority of the bats were chestnut sac winged and were pretty close to the edge. I however wanted to go in deeper to see what was present. My friend did not seem as excited at this, so she asked me to bring her iPhone to snap a couple pictures. I had forgotten my torch, so ended up using my phone's light. At this point I was holding two phones, my camera and was wading into a deep layer of bat muck. As I was trying to determine all the zoonotic disease possibilities I was being exposed to, one of the bats decided to land on my head, and comfortably roost itself half on my face, and half in my hair. Foolishly I did not take a selfie as I was now holding the two phones, my camera, wading in muck with the passenger, and I needed to concentrate. Inside the log cave there were also greater sac winged bats which I did not photograph, corollia species, a fringe lipped bat and a beautiful hairy legged vampire bat.



We spent the rest of the morning into the afternoon looking for the tamarins without luck. On our way back to the lodge, we stopped outside a small village where three silverly woolly monkeys that were rescued and rehabilitated had been released. I was told they are often hanging out with truly wild woolly monkeys. It was great to see them up close in the wild, even if they were very tame.



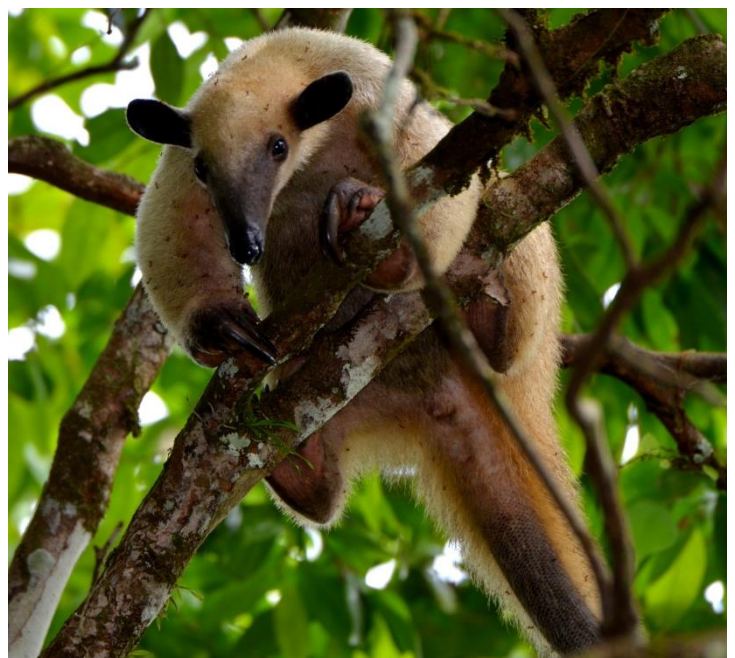
Close by we also watched a large troop of saddleback tamarins. The night safari again behind the main lodge included a linnaeus mouse opossum, two more spiny rats that were in the water, and a very obliging for photos YC rat hanging out on a tree.





10 June – we spent the morning going to an oxbow lake to look at birds. It was one of the better spots for hoatzin, the lodge symbol, and a species my friend had not seen. The bird highlight of the trip happened for me here, as we watched a ferruginous pygmy owl sitting in the open for a prolonged period at 10 am. We also

had our third pygmy marmoset sighting, a lone individual who seemed as surprised to see us as we were him. We then came across our second tamandua of the trip, that after

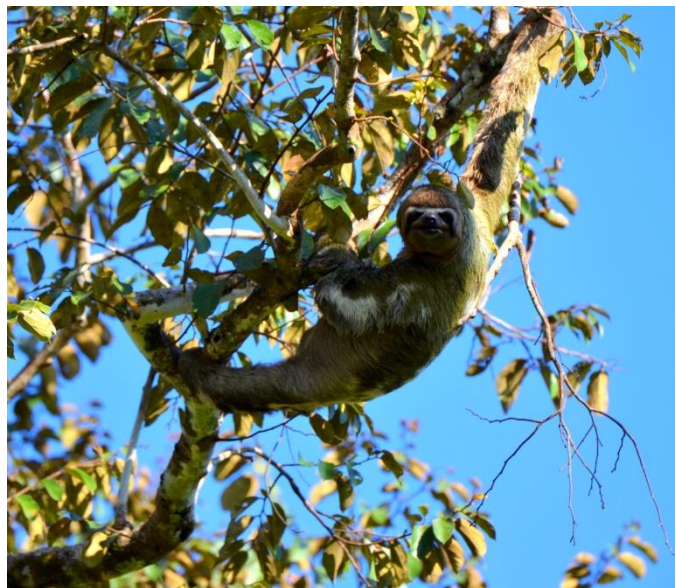


watching us for a minute, laid down in the tree above us and fell asleep.

The afternoon we went to a different lake that was supposed to be good for amazon pink river dolphins. There was the option to swim in the lake as well, however I talked to some of the other guests and was told that the dolphins usually swim off or far away when people got in the water. I had never seen the species before (little did I know how many I would see at Tapiche) so despite my love of jumping in the water with large creatures, I decided to watch from the boat. It turned out to be one of the most memorable moments of the trip as we watched a large male repeatedly swim up to and splash next to our boat, and a female with a calf. We also watched the male pretty much completely jump out of the water, something the species supposedly does not do often.



By the lake we watched a small troop of common squirrel monkeys and a very relaxed brown throated three toed sloth.

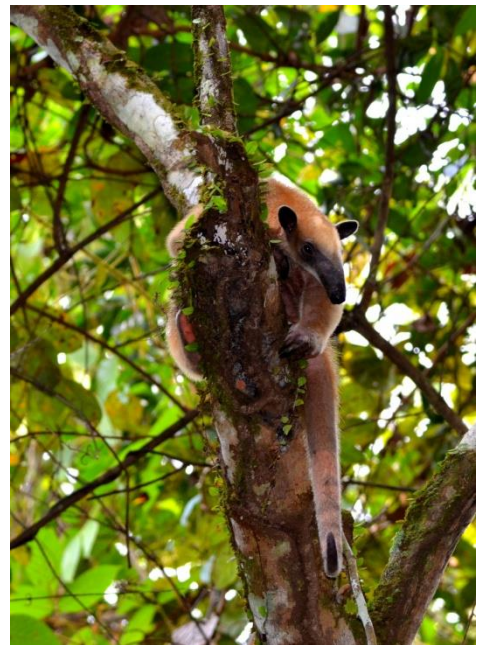




We did a short night safari and saw some long nosed bats as well a a family group of Nancy Ma night monkeys right next to the lodge.

11 June – we spent the morning doing a final sweep of the forest behind the lodge where we saw Southern amazon red squirrels, brown capuchins, more YC rats, common squirrel monkeys,

saddleback tamarins and our number three tamandua who also seemed very sleepy.

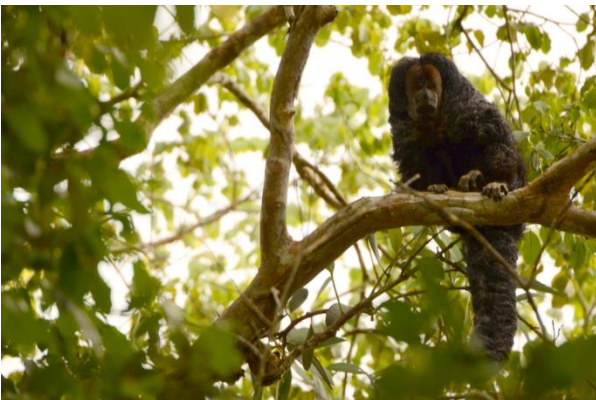




In the afternoon we went to the amazon research center which took about 2 hours by boat. The lodge, like the name says, is set up for researchers as well as tourists. It is more basic with shared bathrooms and smaller rooms. The lodge is based by a grid system of trails that was laid out as transects for population studies of primates. They have a nice primate species list including the mustached tamarin and the red uakari. The flood had however caused damage to some of the grids



and the majority of it was still underwater. One of the species currently being studied is a species of saki monkey. A researcher from Winthrop University in the USA is working at making it a separate species, hopefully by DNA analysis. One theory is they could be hybrids of monk and equatorial sakis, I know all the splitters, lumpers and backflippers may not agree, but they do look different than the other species of saki in the area with more sexual dimorphism. The people there called them brown top sakis, so we will see what the future holds for them. The females had more grayish fur and the males have reddish brown fur around their faces. On one of the tributaries right before the main lodge we had a nice view of a male, female and juvenile saki.



We later decided to go via canoe behind the lodge to search for mustached tamarin. Because the area had not been used very much since the large flood, a lot of it was overgrown. I think we spent more time

moving around and cutting down small branches than actually watching wildlife (but we saw no mammals). I also repeatedly had large chunks of my hair pulled out by vines and other vegetation. I expect to see an award winning photo later this year of a birds nest with my hair in it. We did not find any mammals around the lodge that night.



12 June – we had two full day around the research center, so Weninger decided to do one day to go to a large heron rookery for my bird loving friend, and the second day we would focus on the mustached tamarin. The rookery ended up taking almost all morning to get to. The area was originally supposed to be a release site for amazon manatees (as some had been released earlier in the year near the main lodge), but the government had scrapped the idea for some reason. They did however cut down a path to get towards the rookery, the rest our guides had to do with their machetes.

On the way there we watched tamandua number four (high up in a tree and wide awake), some brown and white fronted capuchins, and common squirrel monkeys. To my frustration Nixon was trying to point out an amazon dwarf squirrel for me, but by the time I got the right tree, it was gone. For bird lovers the rookery



is well worth the journey as we saw large numbers of coqui and boat billed herons as well as aningas. That afternoon we did a boat trip along the main river system in front of the lodge and saw more saki monkeys. 13 June- our final full day. We decided to go to a creek system about 20 minutes from the lodge. We saw two more YC brush tailed rats along the way, and a lone neotropical river otter that Weninger saw well as I only saw water splashing as it went away from us. After about an hour of searching around, we heard the telltale sound of tamarins in the trees above us. Weninger turned to me and said “mustached”. We followed the sound to a small swampy area that had some dry ground. We were asked “can you

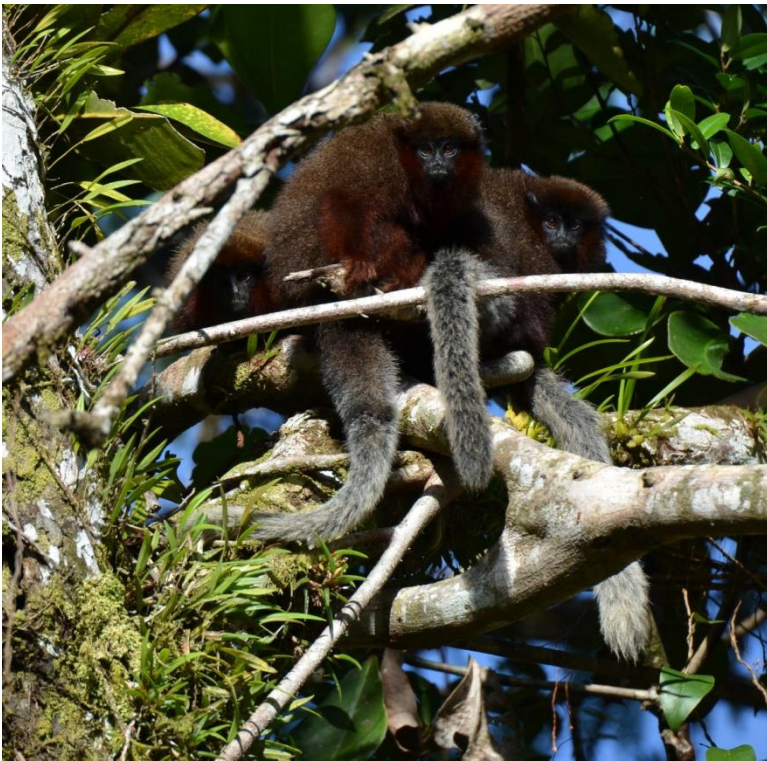
walk?" At first I was confused , had I been limping before, did he know something I didn't, then realized he was staring at my sandals. We had only been on dry land once, so I stopped bringing my dry boots. Never to let a little swamp mud between the toes stop me, we got out, and within minutes I was staring at my first wild mustached tamarin.

We ended up following two troops, one that was traveling with some common squirrels monkeys, the other with some saddleback tamarins. I would imagine they were actually all the same troop, just ones that had split up in the canopy. I was told this also a good area for red uakari, and that they had been seen in this area three weeks before with the tamarins. My intense joy however soon turned to intense pain as some species of ant



decide my exposed flesh on my feet would make for some good chomping. I ended up with countless ant bites on both feet, however it was still worth it. We spent a relaxed afternoon going down the main river again and saw long nosed bats roosting on a tree.

We also saw more fishing bats and a brown throated three toed sloth curled up in a tree.



14 June – I went out early with Weninger to do one final look along the river by the lodge. We saw more long nosed bats and had a prolonged view of a family group of coppery titi monkeys.

We went back to the main lodge to catch the boat to go to Iquitos. People at the lodge said the Nancy Ma night monkeys were day roosting in a tree behind the lodge, so we went to take a look.



• We had an eventful boat ride to Iquitos, and stayed again at the El Dorado Hotel. We were met that evening by Ana from Tapiche who took us to the Greentracks hostel for boot fittings and to go over the program at the lodge.

15 June – Jon pretty much described the all day trip to Tapiche, which is located about 404 km from Iquitos. We decided to get a cab to Nauta to skip a couple of the steps, then did the tuk tuk to the boat taxi to Requena. We actually ended up on a half decent taxi on the way out, with only half the boat being full, and lots of grey river dolphins on the way out to watch. In Requena, we ate lunch and first met Katoo, who would take us to his lodge in his personal boat the rest of the way. Along the way we saw both grey and pink river dolphins, Bolivian squirrel monkeys as well as a brown throated sloth.

16 June – I told Katoo when I met him how much I wanted to see a red uakari. He told me at first my friend and I were birders (WHAT?) but seemed pretty confident that we would see them as the previous group of tourists staying at the lodge had good sightings. We also ended up being the only guests at the lodge at the time which made focusing on the species easier. We met Jose who John had used while at Tapiche, and also had a guide named Miguel who was from the El Chino village which was close to the



Amazonia lodges. Both were excellent to be around! Since my friend and I speak virtually no Spanish, Katoo came with us on most of the excursions. Being a force for good as Jon put it is an understatement. Originally from the Pantanal region of Brazil, he came to Peru and bought the property that his lodge is on. He decided to open the area to tourists to help raise money. He pretty much wages a one-man war on poachers and told us story after story about the poaching problem in Peru,

even on his own property. He told me the locals called him a “monkey hugger” (which I explained to him would be a compliment to me) and does not have a lot of local support. This is just one of the reasons getting tourists there is so important. We decided to spend the first morning in the creek system that Jon had seen his uakaris, as had the tourists the previous week. Before getting there we watched two amazon pink river dolphins repeatedly drive a small school of fish to the shore to eat them, mixed in with two grey river dolphins. Along the creek we saw brown large headed capuchins, long nosed bats and Bolivian squirrel monkeys.

We also saw evidence of vegetation in the water that had been chewed down by a manatee. Since we didn't see any uakaris along the way in, Katoo suggested that we hike back to the base of the creek and have Miguel meet us with the boat. Since my friend was feeling a little under the weather, she decided to go back in the boat with Miguel and meet Katoo and me at the creek base. The hike started well enough along a previous trail Katoo had cut down. At one point we heard an equatorial saki monkey, however despite seeing a figure jump up in the canopy I couldn't get a good view on it. We also saw fresh tapir tracks and one of the largest fecal deposits I think I had ever seen, that Katoo reported was from a jaguar. About 1/3 along the hike the trail was completely flooded with deep water. Katoo then told me we would have to cut our way out, and by this I mean he had to cut our way out as he had the only machete. We would work our way through the forest, come to the trail again, then it would be under water as well. When we got close to the end, the only way out was through thigh high water. Katoo then took my back pack, took my camera, then said get on. Confused, I was like what do you mean? He then told me I only had the one pair of boots and if I went through the water they would get soaked and never dry, so he was going to carry me through the water. I tried to convince him I was fine, but he was finally like, all right and got all my stuff and myself carried through the water. It is a story I have been doing live action replays for my friends since I got back. He claims he carried me for 2 meters. I kept joking with him it was 200 meters, but it really more like 6 meters. I felt a little gypped the rest of the trip not getting the carry



option again, and kept asking him how his back felt.

The afternoon we went to a palm forest that Katoo knew was a sleeping spot for uakaris. It was also near a beautiful lagoon filled with caimans (black, spectacled and amazon dwarf) and a variety of bird species. Again we came up without uakaris. That night I told Katoo I had never seen a paca and he told me there were a few that are around the lodge. We decided to spot light around the lodge initially to the small creek behind it. Near the creek I saw multiple REALLY large bats that Katoo told me were false vampire bats (spectral bats). He told me they used to roost in one of the buildings of the lodge. They have pretty impressive wingspans. We didn't see any paca, so Katoo offered to take me by boat to the lagoon area where we had been earlier that day. As we were getting to the boat a large green anaconda was in the water. Katoo told me it was his first at the lodge, and seemed super excited about it. We went to the lagoon and on the way in and on the way out I saw two separate pacas. I also got a very close of view of a dwarf caiman, my first.

17 June -The next day we decided to do a full day hike towards the palm forest where Katoo had often seen uakaris. Along the river in we saw both dolphin species again. The hike into the forest we saw another YC brush tailed rat high in a tree and watched a family group of saddleback tamarins. When we finally got to the palm section we saw a lone white fronted capuchin, which Katoo told me travel with the uakaris, so we decided to sit and wait for awhile. All in all we either hiked on dry land in



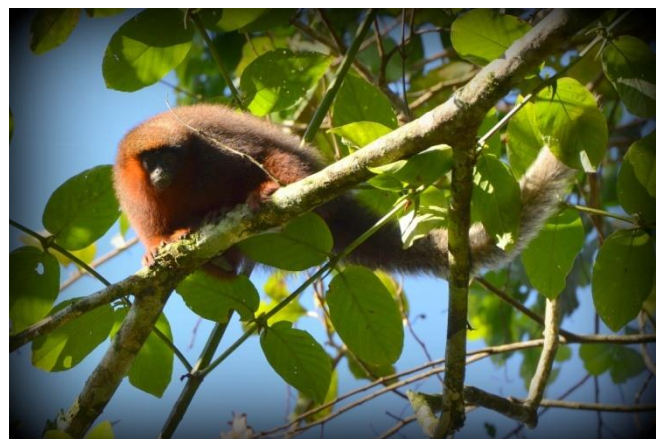
swampy areas (I only fell once, but I am pretty clumsy so there were a couple close calls in the mud) or sat and waited over the next 8 hours. We ended up seeing a couple red howler monkeys, but no uakaris. Not yet defeated, we went that afternoon to the creek system we had been the previous day. We had a wonderful sighting of Bolivian squirrel monkeys racing back and forth along a log in front of us, saw more long nosed bats, red howlers and



watched a family group of four Nancy Ma night monkeys in their day roost.



18 June – our final day we did a day trip to the Garza lagoon to the area where Jon had seen his manatee. This was the final area that Katoo had seen uakaris in, but not the most reliable. Despite this, the lagoon was probably



my favorite spot on his property. My friend and I kept calling it the Garden of Eden. Katoo plans to build a canopy tour here in the future which I think will just add to the area. We didn't see the manatee or the uakari, however did see a family group of giant river otters on the way in, more brown capuchins and Bolivian squirrel monkeys (one group with a juvenile mangrove black hawk patiently waiting nearby to see if it could have a morning snack), a brown throated three toed sloth, both dolphin species and a Brown titi monkey.

This doesn't even include the birds or reptiles we saw in the lagoon. For lunch they set up hammocks for my friend and me to rest in, again it was just a piece of paradise. Katoo had told me that a common opossum came into the kitchen area each night, but usually pretty late. That night just after I



had gotten into bed we heard crashing in the kitchen, then heard Katoo say that's the opossum. We crept into the kitchen area and found it sitting in the preparation area with a pretty guilty look on its face.

Katoo had told me some good stories about that opossum, including my favorite where he fell from the roof on the kitchen table during breakfast with a bunch of birders, only to slowly walk off the table.

19 June –our all day trip back to Iquitos. Katoo seemed almost, almost....as disappointed as I was in not seeing the uakari. He had offered us the option in to sleep in hammocks in the forest overnight during the trip, and also offered us to stay one more morning then sleep overnight in a hotel in Requena. They were both nice offers, however I had gotten the feeling that with the lack of fruit in the areas people usually see them, we also would not see them. He told me that end of July the sightings to the end of dry season the sightings are more reliable. I recently touched base with him and he told me since the end of July they have been seeing the uakaris every day.

20 June – we decided to spend our last morning at the Amazon manatee rescue center (CREA) that is located about 20 minutes via tuk tuk from the

city center at km marker 4.5. At the time I was there they had 5 rehabilitation manatees, three of which for 5 soles you could feed. They had previously in the year released 15 manatees, three of them near the Amazonia lodges. They also had A LOT of rescued turtles, monkeys and a neotropical river otter. It was a great place to visit and a great project to support. The Amazonia facebook page posted recent photos that the recently released manatees are now being frequently seen by tourists.



21 June – home

A couple thoughts about my trip-

-I loved both the lodges. The rainforest around both were pristine, and for the past two years the Amazonia lodges had worked hard to crack down on poaching and hunting by local villagers around the lodge. The Amazonia lodges have a lot of people that are there for a “general tourist jungle experience” with the fact that they offer zip lining and fishing and local village excursions. The good thing was most of the tourists that were there when I was also seemed really excited about wildlife. I also didn't have to

spend all day with them with everyone having their own guides which helped. There were multiple tayra sightings by people at both lodges, as well as some of the stuff I saw. I can't even begin to list the birds and reptiles I saw as it would take an entire trip report each for them. I think Tapiche is more for tourists that really want to watch wildlife with its remote setting and basic accommodations plus what Katoo is doing for wildlife in the area makes it enough of a reason to want to go back. I want to sit in that tower in the Garza lagoon and I still need to see a uakari. Hopefully his recent troubles with local poachers and authorities will smooth over.

-You can never bring enough bug spray to the jungle. I have a theory about mosquitoes. I think the dominant females either train the non-blood sucking males and the weaker females to sacrifice themselves by licking the spray off me, so that they can feed. I sprayed myself to the point of saturation as well as having DEET soaked clothes and I still managed to come home itchy with over with what seemed like 4 million bites.

-A special thank you to Jon for helping me ID the rats in the log with help from Fiona Reid. I told Jon the two of them should set up a bat identification service on the side.

-Besides the primates of course, the mammal of the trip for me was the YC brush tail rat. I had offered Jon doing an entire trip report about my feelings for them, but oddly enough, I never did get confirmation on my offer.

Trip list-

1. Yellow crowned brush tail rat – *Isothrix bistrata*
2. Saddleback tamarin – *Saguinus fuscicollis*
3. Southern Tamandua – *Tamandua tetradactyla*
4. Coppery titi monkey – *Callicebus cupreus*
5. Pygmy marmoset – *Cebuella pygmaea*
6. Brown capuchin (large headed)- *Sapajus paella* - *macrocephalus*
7. Greater fishing bat (greater bulldog bat) – *Noctilio leparinus*
- 8 and 9 – Two species of spiny rat – *Proechimys*
10. Bicolored spined porcupine – *Coendou bicolor*
11. Kinkajou – *Potos flavus*
12. Hairy legged vampire bat – *Diphylla ecaudata*

13. Chesnut sac winged bat – *Cormura brevirostris*
14. Fringe lipped bat – *Trachops cirrhosus*
15. Corollia bat
16. Greater sac winged bat – *Saccopteryx bilineata*
17. Silvery woolly monkey – *Lagothrix poeppigii*
18. Linnaeus common mouse opossum – *Marmosa murina*
19. Common Squirrel monkey – *Saimiri sciureus*
20. Brown throated three toed sloth – *Bradypus variegates*
21. Amazon pink river dolphin – *Inia geffrensis*
22. Nancy Ma night monkey – *Aotus nancymae*
23. Southern Amazon red squirrel – *Sciurus spadiceus*
24. Brown top saki monkey – possible new species
25. White fronted capuchin – *Cebus albifrons*
26. Mustached tamarin (black chested) - *Saguinus mystax*
27. Grey river dolphin (Tucuxi) – *Sotalia fluviatilis*
28. Black capped (Bolivian) Squirrel monkey – *Saimiri boliviensis*
29. Lowland paca – *Cuniculus paca*
30. Venezuelan red howler monkey – *Alouatta seniculus*
31. Giant River Otter – *Pteronura brasiliensis*
32. Spectral bat – *Vampyrus spectrum*
33. Common opossum – *Didelphis marsupialis*
34. Long nosed bat – *Rhynchonycteris naso*
35. Brown titi monkey – *Callicebus brunneus*

Honorary mammal

Ferruginous pygmy owl – *Glaucidium brasilianum*