

**"BACK-YARD" BIRDS IN EASTERN PERU**

By Frank P. Frazier Jr.

In 1966 I lived for about five months, from May to September, at an hacienda on the eastern slopes of the Andes near the town of San Ramon, Peru; this sojourn, together with fairly regular visits at other times during my  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years of residence in Lima on the coast, afforded an acquaintance with the birds of that region on a "back-yard" intimate basis, more so than was possible on excursions from Lima to various other parts of the country, especially since I was able to use mist-nets here.

San Ramon is about 200 miles northeast of Lima, at about  $11^{\circ}$  south of the Equator, at an elevation of approximately 2,300 feet above sea level. The hacienda is some 400 feet higher. It is in a region known in Peru as the Chanchamayo Valley (often cited in reports of certain ornithological expeditions), in the upper part of the humid tropical zone. However, its location only 35 miles by road and much less directly, from the mountain city of Tarma at 10,500 feet altitude, appears to account for the occasional presence of subtropical and even, at times, mountain birds. At the hacienda, warm days (never as hot as New Jersey at its warmest) and cool, sometimes chilly nights are the rule.



The original forest has largely been cut away, although some apparently virgin jungle persists on hilltops visible from the hacienda, and most of the region is dedicated to coffee and avocado plantations - both of which, fortunately, afford conditions comparable to second-growth forest since coffee needs shade, and most of the nearby plantations were more or less left alone except for sporadic thinning of underbrush. Not much of this was being done while I was there due to economic and labor troubles throughout the region.

Most of my observations were made at and around the hacienda, about two miles outside of San Ramon. The house, on a hillside, is surrounded by low grasses and thick shrubbery with occasional trees, and just beyond, by "woods", i.e. largely untended coffee and avocado plantation. Most of the time, I kept one or two nets set along the edge of the shrubbery not far from the house and occasionally, when time permitted (as this was not an ornithological expedition and business needed attention), I set nets back farther in the woods. While these tended to catch only a certain element of the local birdlife - the "skulkers" and low-level birds - the nets produced many birds I might not have observed otherwise, at least not well enough to identify. No banding was done, as I was not there long enough to conduct any organized project, and the local residents would have little idea of what a band meant, should they find a bird wearing one.

A table summarizing my observations follows but one phenomenon deserves special mention. In front of the hacienda house was a tall tree, some 50 or 60 feet tall, known as an Oropel (genus Erythrina; I know no other name for it). Most of the time this tree had nothing to call attention to it except for its size, but during the second half of August it gradually lost its leaves, and then produced countless small red flowers which lasted until late September. In its flowering period, when from afar it was a red patch against the deep green background, it was a veri-



table magnet for birds, which fed there throughout the day. At times, there might be 30 or 40 hummingbirds and 20 or so Bananaquits in it at one time, together with a few larger birds.

Many of the birds often seen around the house fed in this tree with varying regularity, but by far the most abundant bird there was a large hummingbird, genus Colibri - very similar to the Sparkling Violet-ear (Colibri coruscans) of western Andean slopes, and possibly conspecific with it; there were, however, differences, but I was never able to satisfy myself, at the museum in Lima, which of the several other possible species this was. Unfortunately, none of these hummers ever entered a net. Second in abundance at the Oropel tree was the Bananaquit (Coereba flaveola) which, unlike the Colibri which I seldom saw elsewhere, is an abundant bird around the hacienda. So are the icterids, the Yellow-rumped Cacique (Cacicus cela) and Russet-crowned Oropendola (Psarocolius angustifrons); a few of each - particularly the Cacique - were always in the Oropel in September.



Barred Antshrike  
(Thamnophilus doliatus)

Parakeets (but never parrots) occasionally flew over the hacienda in noisy, high-flying groups, but the only ones I was able to identify were White-eyed Parakeets (Aratinga leucophthalmus), 12 to 20 of which came in a flock every morning shortly after dawn, to feed in the Oropel. Two other species were seen only in this tree while it was in bloom - a single female Black-throated Mango (Anthracocorax nigricollis), a drab hummingbird with a black line down the middle of the underparts, and from one to three pairs of Purple Honeycreepers (Cyanerpes caeruleus), male and female almost always together, which came regularly while the tree was in bloom.

The following table lists the 83 species of birds found in and around the hacienda, with symbols under the habitat columns to indicate their relative abundance. The habitat columns are headed as follows:

1. Shrubby and low trees near the hacienda house and/or around the town of San Ramon.
2. Higher trees in settled area; flying overhead.
3. The "woods" - seldom or never seen around the house.
4. Open country - fields at the hacienda or in the level land below, along the river and near town.

Where none of the above apply, appropriate notes are made. Symbols indicating abundance are:

A. Abundant, many seen daily.

C. Common, one or more seen daily.

U. Uncommon, seen regularly but not daily.

S. Scarce, seen quite infrequently but not so much so as to be considered rare.

1,2,3 etc. Rare: the number refers to number of occasions seen; a number in parentheses following this, indicates the number of individuals seen if more than one on any occasion.

\* (Asterisk) - see notes on certain individual species at end of the table.

Common Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4
Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis				1(6)*
Turkey Vulture	Cathartes aura		C		
Plumbeous Kite	Ictinia plumbea		2(3)		
Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle	Geranoaetus melanoleucus	(1: 7,000 ft. alt.)			
Zone-tailed Hawk	Buteo albonotatus	1			
Roadside Hawk	Buteo magnirostris		C		
Short-tailed Hawk	Buteo brachyurus		S		
Speckled Chachalaca	Ortalis guttata	U		C	
Spotted Sandpiper	Actitis macularia	Riverside (1)			
Ruddy Ground Dove	Columbigallina talpacoti	C			A
Gray-fronted Dove	Leptotila rufaxilla	U		C	
White-eyed Parakeet	Aratinga leucophthalma	Oropel tree: see			
Squirrel Cuckoo	Piaya cayana	U		above	
Smooth-billed Ani	Crotophaga ani	C			A
Barn Owl	Tyto alba	4			
Band-bellied Owl	Pulsatrix melanota		1*	*	
Sand-colored Nighthawk	Chordeiles rupestris				A*
Pauraque	Nyctidromus albicollis				A
White-collared Swift	Streptoprocne zonaris		S*		
Chestnut-collared Swift	Cypseloides rutilus		1*		
Fork-tailed Wood Nymph	Thalurania furcata	A			
Black-throated Mango	Anthracoocorax nigricollis	Oropel tree (1)			
Violetear (sp.?)	Colibri sp.	Oropel tree (A)			
Bluish-fronted Jacamar	Galbula cyanescens			S	
Black-spotted Barbet	Capito niger				U

Common Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4
Emerald Toucanet	Aulacorhynchus prasinus	S			
Lineated Woodpecker	Dryocopus lineatus				U
Gold-fronted Piculet	Picumnus aurifrons	U			
Yellow-tufted Woodpecker	Melanerpes cruentatus				C
Red-stained Woodpecker	Venilornis affinis	1(2)			
Little Woodpecker	Venilornis passerinus	C			
Great Antshrike	Taraba major	1(2: a pair)			
Barred Antshrike	Thamnophilus doliatus	A			
Stripe-chested Antwren	Myrmotherula longicauda	2			
Black-crowned Tityra	Tityra inquisitor	1			
Little Ground-tyrant	Muscisaxicola fluviatilis	Near river: C			
Black Phoebe	Sayornis nigricans				A
Long-tailed Tyrant	Colonia colonus				U
Tropical Kingbird	Tyrannus melancholicus	A	A		A
Streaked Flycatcher	Myiodynastes maculatus				S
Vermilion-crowned Flycatcher	Myiozetetes similis		S		C
Gray-capped Flycatcher	Myiozetetes granadensis				1
Common Tody-Flycatcher	Todirostrum cinereum	C			
Giant Elaenia	Elaenia gigas				1(2)
Olive-striped Flycatcher	Mionectes olivaceus				1
Ochre-bellied Flycatcher	Pipromorpha oleaginea	U			
White-winged Swallow	Tachycineta albiventer				S*
Blue & White Swallow	Notiochelidon cyanoleuca	A			
White-banded Swallow	Atticora fasciata				U
Rough-winged Swallow	Stelgidopteryx ruficollis	C			C
House Wren	Troglodytes aedon	A			
Swainson's Thrush	Hylocichla ustulata				1
Black-billed Thrush	Turdus ignobilis	S*			U*
Russet-crowned Warbler	Basileuterus coronatus	1			
River Warbler	Basileuterus rivularis	Bushes near river: C			
Bananaquit	Coereba flaveola	A	A		
Purple Honeycreeper	Cyanerpes caeruleus	Oropel tree (3 pr.)			
Blue Dacnis	Dacnis cayana				S
Swallow-Tanager	Tersina viridis				S
Purple-throated Euphonia	Tanagra chlorotica	C			
Thick-billed Euphonia	Tanagra lanirostris	2			
Golden-bellied Euphonia	Tanagra chrysopasta	*			
Paradise Tanager	Tangara chilensis				1(4)
Blue-necked Tanager	Tangara cyanicollis	C			
Turquoise Tanager	Tangara mexicana		U		



<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Blue & Yellow Tanager	<i>Thraupis bonariensis</i>	U*			
Blue-gray Tanager	<i>Thraupis virens</i>	A	A		
Palm Tanager	<i>Thraupis palmarum</i>		U		
Silver-beaked Tanager	<i>Ramphocelus carbo</i>	A			A
Orange-headed Tanager	<i>Thlypopsis sordida</i>	1			
Black-faced Tanager	<i>Schistochlamys melanopis</i>	3			
Magpie Tanager	<i>Cissopis leveriana</i>	Forest edge: C			
Dusky-green Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius atrovirens</i>		1		
Russet-backed Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius angustifrons</i>		C	A	
Yellow-rumped Cacique	<i>Cacicus cela</i>		A	A	
Giant Cowbird	<i>Scaphidura oryzivora</i>				S
Buff-throated Saltator	<i>Saltator maximus</i>			C	
Grayish Saltator	<i>Saltator coerulescens</i>	C	U		
Yellow-bellied Seedeater	<i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>				A
Lesser Seed-Finch	<i>Oryzoborus angolensis</i>				1
Blue-black Grassquit	<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>				C
Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>	S*			S*
Yellow-browed Sparrow	<i>Myospiza aurifrons</i>				A



Brushy hillside behind hacienda house  
(Photos by the author)

(\*) Individual species notes:

Cattle Egret - (cf. my note in *The Auk*, 81:553-4, Oct. 1964) One was seen with cows on the highway just west of San Ramon Nov. 27, 1964, and five more at the hacienda with cows, on the same day. I saw no others here, but local residents say that they have occasionally seen white egrets with cows in the last few years.

Turkey Vulture - Single individuals, sometimes two or three, were seen almost daily; none were seen well enough to allow suspicion of a Yellow-headed Vulture (*Cathartes burrovianus*), and strangely enough, I never saw a Black Vulture in this region, although it is abundant both on the coast and in other jungle areas in eastern Peru.

Band-bellied Owl - One of these owls, closely related to the better known Spectacled Owl (*Pulsatrix perspicillata*), was shot from a tree near the hacienda house by an Indian; on two evenings I heard owls calling to each other on wooded hillsides nearby. "Squeaking" brought one within flashlight range and it appeared to be the same species. If so, I believe there were three pairs of these owls in less than a square mile of hilly, overgrown avocado plantation and jungle remnants.

Sand-colored Nighthawk - This species was common at dusk, hawking for insects low over San Ramon and over the river which runs by the hacienda and through town; but they were only occasionally seen over fields closer to the hacienda.

White-collared Swift - I never saw this swift in this region until August 25, 1966, when a large flock was seen circling over San Ramon. Flocks of varying size were seen on about ten different days since then, until the end of September when I left the region.

Chesnut-collared Swift - Small swifts were only rarely seen, but on September 22, 1966, a very large flock of swifts was present; apart from the preceding species, all that came close enough to be identified were of this species.

White-winged Swallow - Characteristic of lowland jungle rivers, this swallow first appeared around the hacienda on September 18, 1966 and until the end of the month one (perhaps the same one) was seen nearly every day. A local resident recognized it as different from the very abundant Blue & White Swallow, and pronounced it "a rare bird".

Black-billed Thrush - This bird sings and acts like a Robin but is smaller and grayish brown. It was regularly seen in the woods in November, 1964, and May and September, 1966, but seldom seen between those months; I missed it altogether during visits in April, August and November, 1963, and April, 1964. This species' movements may be a most interesting object of study.

Golden-bellied Euphonia - This sparrow-sized tanager nested behind a slab of loose bark on a dead tree several feet from the hacienda porch, where I often saw them feeding young there in October, 1965. But none at all were seen previously, nor in 1966.

Blue & Yellow Tanager - This bird first appeared in my net and, although it is common enough on the western slopes of the Andes near Lima, it was quite a problem to identify because it was so unexpected here. It was occasionally seen since then in bushes near the house, and is apparently a case of a mountain bird finding its way down toward the jungle.

Rufous-collared Sparrow - Abundant in Lima and in the mountains, where it is a town bird until displaced (in some parts of Lima) by the lately-arrived English Sparrows, this bird appeared several times in my nets and also in the town of San Ramon - presumably a case similar to the preceding species, of a mountain bird somewhat out of its normal range.

Until "The Birds of Colombia" by R. Meyer de Schauensee was published in 1964 (Livingston, Narberth, Pa.), identification was achieved by taking careful notes and, some time later, comparing them with museum specimens. Needless to say, this left many birds unidentified and even with the new book (which is very helpful for birds of eastern Peru) many birds were seen which did not appear in it, a fair proportion of which had to stay unidentified. In 1966 the same author (and publisher) published "The Species of Birds of South America", a checklist which is very helpful in indicating possibilities in a given area since known ranges are given; and also in assigning English names in uniform fashion for all South American birds.

Very special thanks are due to Dr. Maria Koepcke, Peru's only professional ornithologist (and EBBA member) who answered my inquiries and assisted me in learning the birds with infinite patience - and without whose help my list of Peruvian birds would be a fraction of its size, and this article would never have been written.

As reviewed in the March-April 1965 (EBBA News: 28:2 p. 73), Dr. Koepcke has written a guide to the birds of the central coast and mountains of Peru, "Las Aves del Departamento de Lima" (1964). She is now in the process of writing a comprehensive guide to the birds of Peru, in English and illustrated with her own paintings. I have seen some of these, and they are superb. Hopefully, this book will appear some time next year.

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