

Peru - Primate Watching - 22 May - 30 May 2026

Once again in my quest for all primates Neotropical, I traveled back to Peru in May of 2026. The fabulous Julio C. Tello Alvarado who runs Ikam Expeditions (www.ikamexpeditions.com) organized the trip and joined my friend Julie and I once again for this trip. The trip materialized last year when I was talking to him about other primate hotspots in the country.

One of the first things we talked about was the Andean Saddleback Tamarin. Saddleback tamarins have seen their fair share of splitting when it comes to primate taxonomy. Last year I visited the Ikam expedition site outside Moyabambo, Peru that has residents tamarins that show up to its bird feeders. Looking at distribution maps these have always been clumped as Andean, but more recent research shows them to be Illiger's Saddleback. So one of the species I wanted to see in its pure form (especially knowing my Andean tick from last year would be no more as I suspect) was to travel south to Pucallpa to try for them. We spent the rest of the time in and around Iquitos, Peru at the Allpahuayo Mishana Reserve, then to Muyuna Lodge and finally for a brief stop at the Ceiba Tops Lodge.

Day 1 - after a flight from Washington, d.c on Avianca and a brief stop through Bogota, I landed at the new Jorge Chavez International Airport. Wyndham still has a Costa del Sol hotel right within walking walking distance of the old airport, but has built a more expensive Grand Costa Del Sol within walking distance of the new airport. Not realizing the split, I booked the old hotel, but they supply a shuttle service to the hotel right outside gate 3. I spent a non human mammal less night and met up with Julie.

Day 2 - We met Julio early the next morning for our one hour flight to Pucallpa. Julio had booked us for two nights at the Qallwa Hotel in the "downtown" area of the city. The hotel had given itself a 4 star rating on the sign outside, something Julie later commented must have been just for decoration for the sign. Being on the weekend, the hotel turned out to be the disco party spot of the city, only to be competed with by the locals having there own music "disco off" across the street each night.

Julio had a friend that had previously seen the Andean Saddlebacks as well as Burnished Saki Monkey on a private concession owned by BAM

(Bosques Amazonicos). The organization is a Peruvian environmental and forestry organization that works to restore degraded areas in Peru. This includes operating large scale nurseries to re-plant in such areas, as well as working to fight climate change in the Peruvian Amazon and working on sustainable development projects. Like so many places I have been in my beloved Brazil, you see small forest patches around Pucallpa, along with the mass deforestation. Our first stop was the headquarters downtown, where we met with one of the BAM officials, as well as a videographer that interviewed Julio about why were there and about his work with ecotourism in Peru. We were then given a driver and official vehicle to drive about 30 minutes where we met two of the local BAM workers, Noel and Ricardo, who would act as our guides. We were told that we would get in canoes then have to walk for a bit to Campo Verde which acted as a ranger outpost for BAM workers. From that area we would then base all of our primate watching. This seemed simple enough. So Julio and Julie got into one canoe while I got into the other. Their canoe was more raised up, and mine was basically me sitting on the floor. The canoe ride took about 40 minutes and I spent the majority of the time scooping water out of the bottom to make sure we stayed afloat. At one point I got a significant amount of water down one of my boots and thought to myself "Well, that is not going to be comfortable to hike in wet boots....."

After floating through an area with more Snail kites than I have ever seen so close together, we stopped in an area that was still underwater and was told it was time to hike. Little did I know that for the next hour we would be hiking an uneven "trail" that was mostly under water. Under water sometimes to shin depth, but sometimes mid way up my thighs. My concern with wet boot hiking them became an after thought. The locals gave us sticks to use to test the ground in front of us to see how deep it was with each step. Several things I stepped in again re-confirmed my belief in quick sand as I had to pull all my force to get myself out. We then finally made it to a small forest patch where Noel told us he had often seen the tamarins. So after a search, we trudged along to make it to Campo Verde for a quick break and to drain the water from our boots.



The camp consisted of a few semi raised buildings where some of the rangers had tents to sleep in and a small cooking area. I was also impressed to see that they took fitness seriously here in this part of Peru.



By the time we had made it to the camp it was already getting late. We were told that the tamarins sometimes are around the camp, but no one had ever seen a Saki Monkey there. It was at this point that we found out that a large forest fire in 2023 had burned some of the core forest zones of

the conservation area and they were still working to bring it back. We were also shown the “path” to get to at least one of the forest areas that would require more water hiking, some of which could reach up to our necks. So at this point we decided to head back to Pucallpa and start our hiking early the next morning. Prior to leaving Julio spotted a pair of White-Browed Titi Monkeys that showed casual interest in us. After our cooling and refreshing hike back to the boat, close to where we met the car we watched a fast moving troop of Peruvian Black-Capped Squirrel Monkeys that were traveling with several tamarins. Sadly, Julio and I did not get on the tamarins. Julie in the boat in front of us saw the monkeys as well as an arboreal rodent (species unknown) and several flying bats. We made it back to the hotel for dinner, and the lovely booming noises of the disco.....

Day 3 - We decided to leave the hotel around 5 am that morning. After the drive, the canoe ride and the water hiking we made it to Campo Verde. During the canoe ride we saw several squirrel monkeys, as well as being chorused by multiple Titi Monkeys and distant Colombian Red Howler Monkeys. We took a brief breakfast at camp and watched two White-Browed Titi Monkeys at the camp's edge.



At this point it was time to cross the area with large pockets of water we had seen the day before. Several of the camp rangers joined us. The rangers made in several spots make shift bridges for us to walk over until we reached a forest fragment edge. The water we hiked through was much deeper than the entry hike into the camp. After not seeing any primates we then started to trudge through grassland as the rangers used machetes to try to get us to another forest fragment. There were many problems with this plan as we were walking at a snail's pace with no real fragment in close sight. The rangers at this point told us they did not have a good spot for the Saki monkeys and the spot that Julio's friend had seen them in was not easily accessible. It was also during this walk that I encountered a new species of insect, well at least for me. The best way for me to describe them is basically if a bullet ant and a fire ant made a mutant baby who made it their sole purpose in life is to eat human flesh. Julie and I pulled multiple of these large red creatures off of various parts of our body during this walk (note the whelt/pain/itchiness from the bites lasted days on me) to the point where my usual attitude of keep trying was defeated. I am not even mentioning the mosquitos here at this point. After a small rant to Julie with her just listening, we talked to Julio and told him we thought this exercise was futile and we wanted to head back to the first forest fragment. So we turned around and walked to the first forest fragment. While the rangers started collecting some kind of fallen seed pods for re-planting, we watched a small troop of Black-Capped Squirrel Monkeys. We then took a break to eat lunch and Julio called out "I hear tamarins". We then for the next 20 minutes or so had fantastic views of three Andean Saddle-back Tamarins.





Watching them was definitely the highlight of the day. At some points we did have to stand in water puddles to get close views. So after watching them, then talking about them, Julio suggested we walk off trail in the forest fragment to look for the Saki Monkeys. As I was getting my things together, I went to pull my glasses off the top of my head and they were not there. I looked around me and could not find them. Then I enlisted Julio, Julie and every ranger to try to help me find them. I knew I had them on before going into the forest fragment and suspected they fell off while I was photographing the tamarins. The problem was the forest floor had multiple areas under water with the rest being covered with dried leaves. After 30 minutes of looking Julio suggested that when we get to Iquitos I get new glasses. I started doing the “time” math in my head and how much doing this would take away from my primate watching. Luckily with a machete poking into one of the puddles, one of the rangers found my glasses. While the glass portion was scratched on both lenses, at least trying to get new glasses would not be part of the trip. By this point it was

too late to look for the sakis, so we started our long trek back. Once back in the canoes we saw more Squirrel Monkeys and I saw two more small troops of Saddle-back Tamarins. Luckily back at our four star hotel the disco was in full force so we had music playing to help us fall steadily to sleep.....

Day 4 - after a slight sleep in, we had a late morning direct flight to Iquitos. We checked into El Dorado Classic Hotel downtown which had comfortable rooms and no party scene that I witnessed. After lunch Julio suggested we do a late afternoon walk in the Allpahuayo Mishana Reserve to look for our next targets - the Aquino's Titi Monkey, Red-Mantled Saddle-back Tamarin and the Equatorial Saki Monkey. Depending on traffic the reserve is about 45-60 minutes from Iquitos on a decent road. On the outskirts of the reserve we met Zaith Ali Hibrain Rosales Atias who was recommended by one of Julio's friends to help us look for primates. He had just graduated with a biology degree and was working for Instituto de la Investigacion de la Amazonia Peruana (IIAP). Julio first suggested we hike on the Inia trail which was basically on the reserve edge which was still being used for logging. One of his friends had seen the titi monkey there two months prior to our visit. But after walking a portion of the trail with dusk setting in and not seeing any mammals, we opted to head back to Iquitos for a good nights sleep.

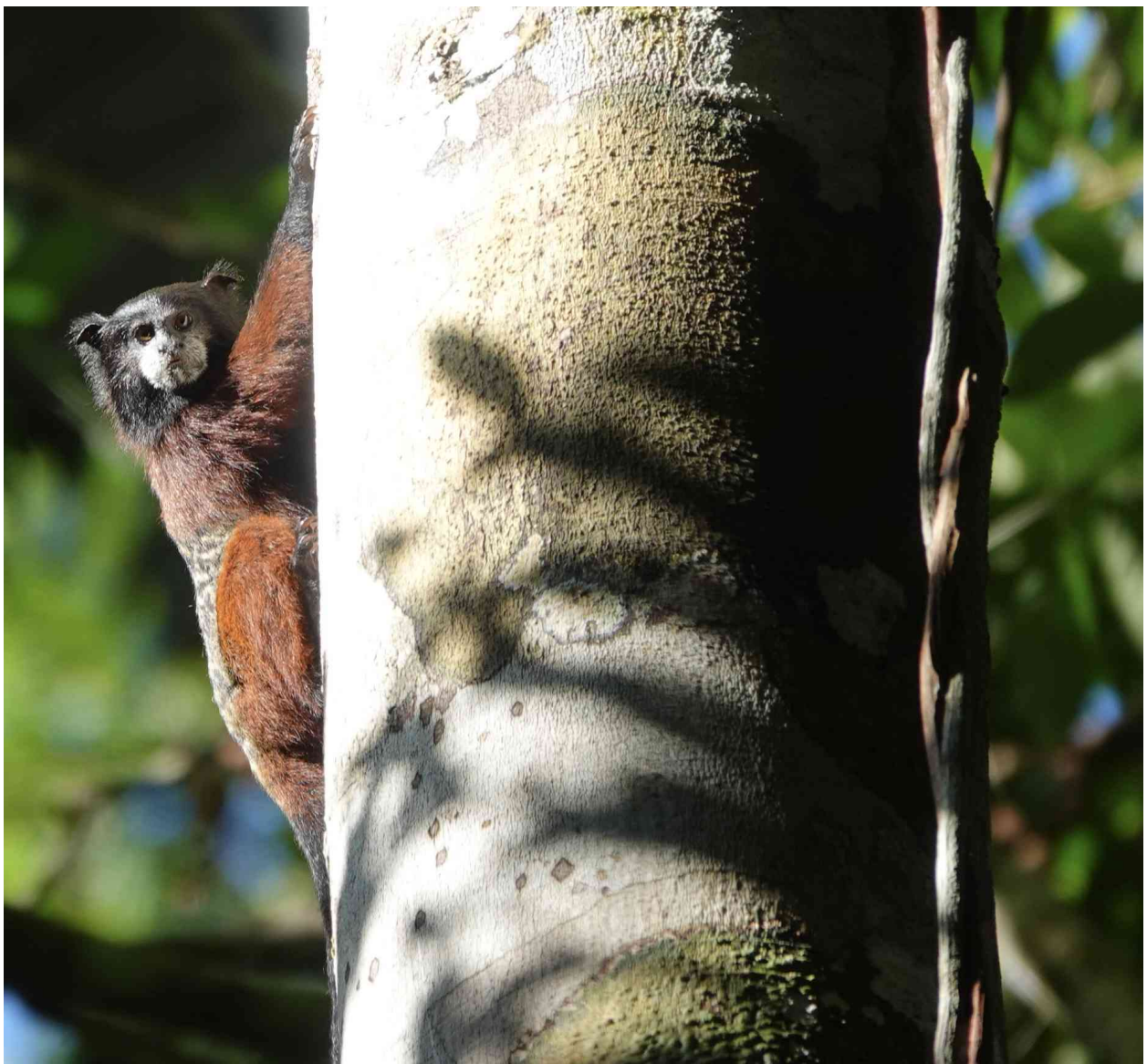


Day 5 - after an early morning start we met Zaith again close to the above sign.

This was in about the mid section of the reserve. We next came close to this sign and area to look around first.



Literally after what seemed like one minute of walking we heard tamarins calling ahead of us. They were not difficult to find and after another minute or so of walking we were in the midst of a large troop of Red-mantled Saddle-back Tamarins. The tamarins were traveling with several very relaxed Common Squirrel Monkeys. We ended up staying with the tamarins for an extended period of time.



We continued along this trail and saw two other troops of tamarins, a Linnaeus's Two-toed Sloth and had brief views of a Black Agouti before going to a nearby restaurant for lunch.

After this we went back to the Inia Trail and walked a longer section. We heard several troops of White-browed Titi Monkey, but no Aquino's. We talked to two rangers that were living in a house along the trail and they reported that sometimes in the mornings they see titi monkeys right outside the house. We decided at that point to come back early the next morning and stake out the house. On the way out we saw more tamarins, one with a very small baby.

Day 6 - Back to the Inia Trail at dusk. On the way in we saw more tamarins and Squirrel Monkeys, then waited until after dawn by the house. After neither seeing or hearing any titis, we walked the entire four km of the trail to the end. We heard multiple White-Browed Titis and saw more tamarins and squirrel monkeys. At this point it was around 9:30 am. Micah Riegner had tipped me off that he had seen the Aquino's not far from the ticket office for the reserve a few years prior. So we opted to head to that area of the park to continue our search. Julio talked to one of the rangers there and he also reported that he hears both species of titi monkey in the mornings by the office. So we headed to the main trail with this entrance to start out search. I asked what the name of the trail was and was told it is just the "main trail".



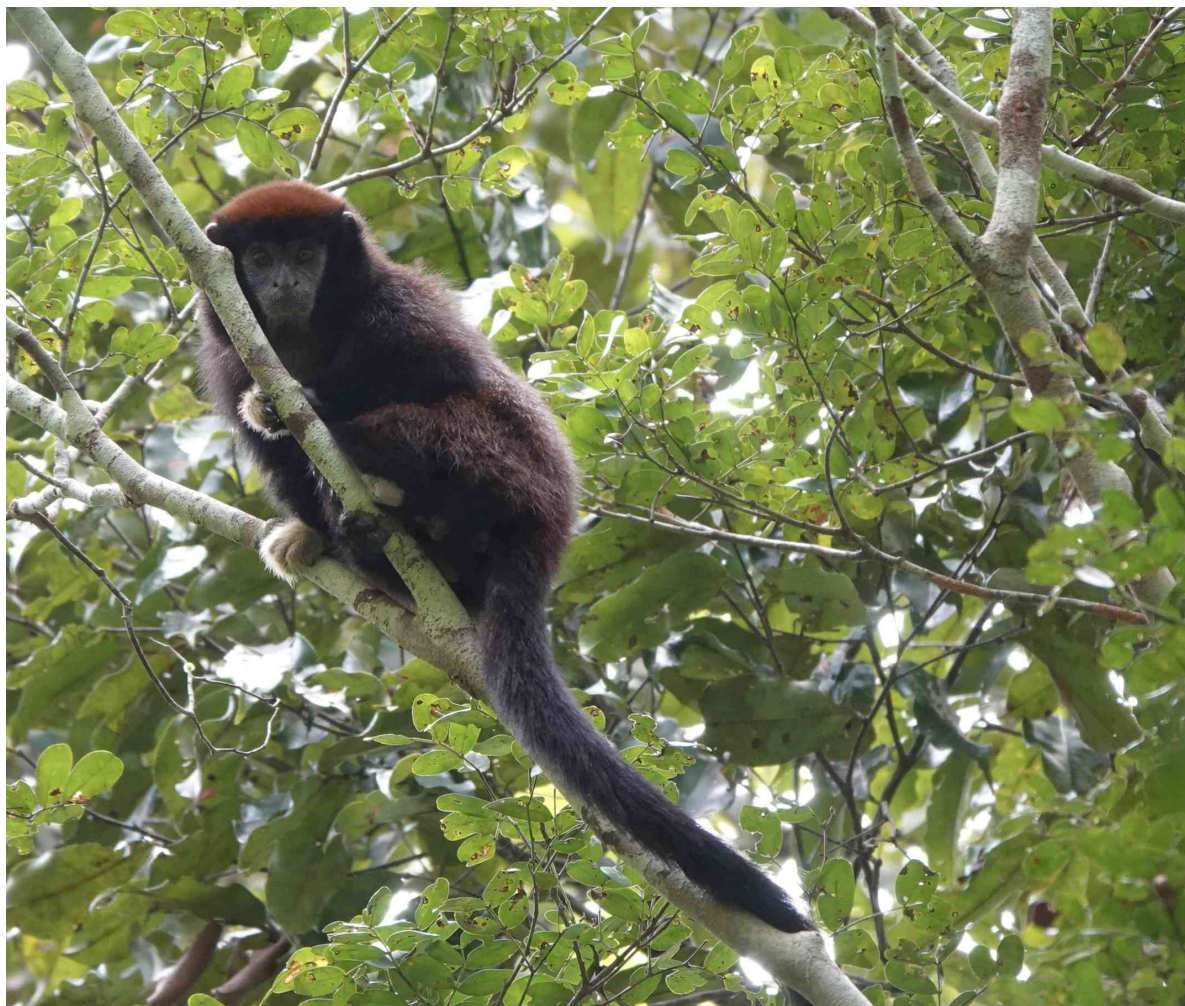
Close to the entry of the trail two very relaxed Common Squirrel Monkeys were hanging out.



When we started walking along the trail we came to the following sign. We headed in the ‘largo” direction.

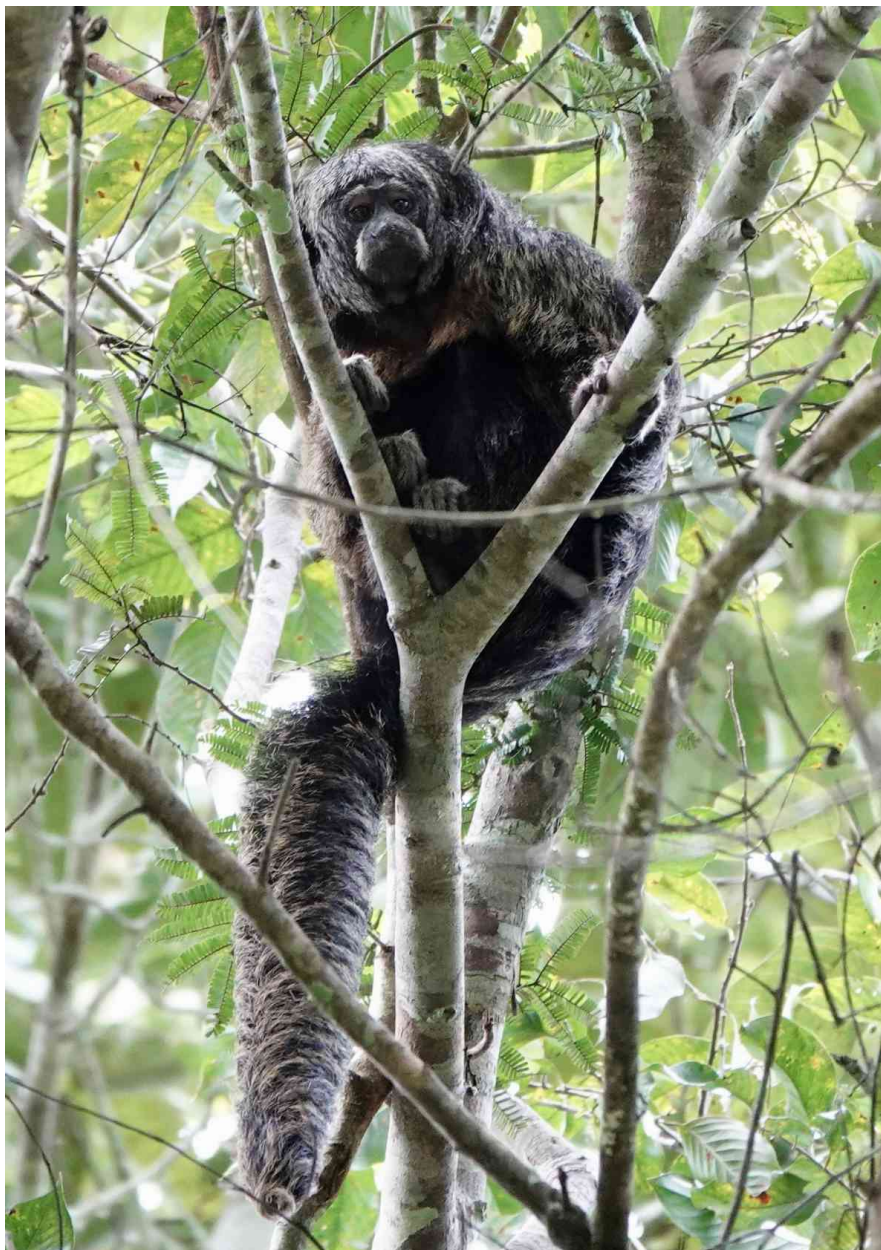


After walking another ten minutes Julio suddenly stopped and was scanning the area in front of us. Almost at the same time we both saw a brown furry tail hanging from a tree in front of us. Julio called out



“Aquinos”. We were then rewarded with a family of three Aquino’s Titi Monkeys, with one member off and on positioning itself to stare at us.

We watched the family until after about twenty minutes they disappeared into the canopy. We decided then to walk back to the ticket area and go to lunch. We watched several more squirrel monkeys, then came to a small down sloping hill and saw a troop of tamarins at eye level. While watching them Julio very casually called out “Saki Monkeys”. Turning to the right a family of three Equatorial Saki Monkeys were running through the canopy above us. Two of them stopped for a short period to time to look at us.



With all of our targets seen well, we had a very casual lunch before heading back to another trail from the main ticket office. One of the rangers came with us at this point and we hiked at a high pace for the rest of the afternoon. We watched two White-browed Titi Monkeys feeding in a fruiting tree, and saw more Squirrel Monkeys and Tamarins.

Day 7 - Before coming back to Peru Julie had wanted to stay at a lodge that had some of the more classic Amazonian species. So Julio had set it up for us to spend the night at the Muyuna Lodge. Peruvian owned, the lodge is about three hours from Iquitos, 140 km upriver from Iquitos within the Tamshiyacu-Tahuayo Reserve. The lodge itself is located on a small tributary of the Amazon River. So after doing a briefing in the morning at the Muyuna office in Iquitos, we first traveled by car, then by boat to get to the lodge. We were met by our fantastic lodge guide Francisco Arimuya Panduro who I can not recommend enough. After eating lunch he suggested we do a walk behind the lodge proper. Still slightly under water, we were given rubber boats and a stick to start the walk. I briefly flashed back to Pucallpa. Almost immediately behind the lodge Julio spotted a family of three Coppery Titi Monkeys in front of us. Behind us we then had brief views of shy Black-Mantled Tamarins. There was also a bird which I can not remember that Francisco seemed excited about, but I never saw as I was watching the titi monkeys.





We then followed the tamarins as best as we could until they ran off. We were then taken to a tree where two Southern Pygmy Marmosets were feeding. There was also a large number of Mosquitos that started feeding on us while we were watching the marmosets. Pretty much right after getting to the tree it started pouring raining. We headed back to the lodge until the rain stopped, then took a motorized canoe ride. During the ride we saw multiple troops of Colombian Red Howler Monkeys, Brown-throated three-toed Sloth, quick views of an adult Capybara, and a single Large Headed Capuchin. The boat ride included the classic sunset views on the amazon and went just past dusk. We saw several Greater Fishing Bats feeding next to boat. Prior to going back to the lodge, Francisco told

us he wanted to show us something he had found the day before when he was exploring by himself. He then took us to a small outlet to show one of my most wanted mammal killers, the Emerald Tree Boa.



I think based on how excited Julie and I were with it, he knew it was a good find! After dinner we did a brief night walk behind the lodge where

we had trekked in the afternoon. While we did see many reptiles and amphibians, the rest of the night was mammal less.

Day 8 - We did an early morning boat ride along the river close to the lodge and saw more sloths, howler monkeys and several Black-capped Squirrel Monkeys. We were then taken to an area of the Amazon river close to a small island where several Amazon Pink river Dolphins were feeding.



The lodge also allows people to swim with them, but we did not. After watching the dolphins we went back to the river by the lodge and were taken to a small tributary to a Nancy Ma's Night Monkey day roost.



Along the way we saw a single Pygmy Marmoset. Francisco then took us to an area where he sometimes sees Monk Saki Monkeys. While looking

unsuccessfully for them we saw more Squirrel Monkeys and Large Headed Capuchins. We did a final short walk to watch a pair of Pygmy Marmosets that were off an on feeding then grooming each other.



We went back to the lodge for lunch, then headed back towards Iquitos to spend the night. During the boat ride on the Amazon we saw a single Grey River Dolphin (Tucuxi).

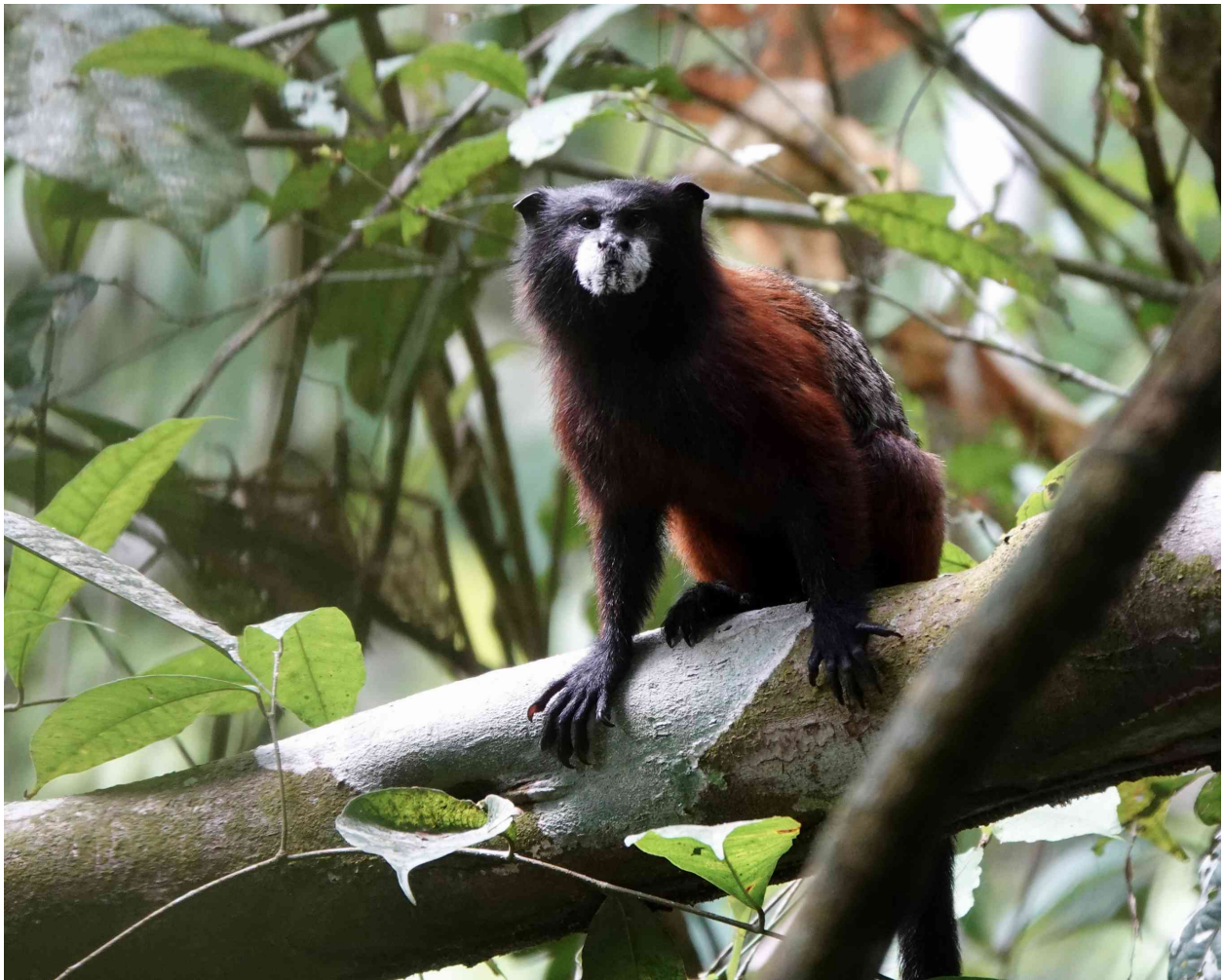
Day 9 - prior to coming back to Peru Micah Riegner had also tipped me off about the Ceiba Tops Lodge. With its location on the Amazon River, the Pygmy Marmosets there were the Northern species. So we decided to spend one night there to see them. We went to the lodge headquarters close to our hotel and met our lodge guide Luis. After a 45 minute boat ride down the Amazon River we got to the lodge. The lodge has more of an upscale feel with paved walkways and boardwalks, a large pool and restaurant and air conditioned rooms. Luis told us he knew of several trees that marmosets were around and he proceeded to show us all of them. The first trees were directly across from room 407. We quickly found a very obliging Northern Pygmy Marmoset in a large tree.



We walked towards another set of trees and had a quick view of a Black Agouti. We walked to the back portion of a small football field where two more marmosets were feeding in a large tree.



Back on the lodge proper grounds across from room 906 we watched another single marmoset which was then spooked off by a small troop of Red-mantled Saddle-back tamarins. The tamarins I was told were also a common sight around the lodge.



Luis then suggested that we cross the Amazon river to the southern bank to look for more primates. We came to a small boardwalk and had quick views of a Southern Pygmy Marmoset as well more Squirrel Monkeys. Luis then told us that a nearby village, Los Palmos, had Spix's Mustached Tamarins which would have been a lifer for Julio. We walked around the village to the back area where there is a large football field and small village cemetery. While we did see more Squirrel Monkeys we came up empty handed on the tamarins, but decided we would come back the next morning to check. On the way back to the lodge we saw a single Brown-throated three-toed sloth. After dinner we walked one of the lodge trails and Julio spotted a single Linnaeus two-toed sloth.

Day 10 - We woke up to pouring rain. After it let up a bit we went back to Los Palmos where it continued to rain. We watched for the tamarins for awhile, but came up empty handed. After a quick lunch we headed back to Iquitos, then the airport for our flight to Lima before heading home.

All in all another great trip to Peru. Julio did a wonderful job setting up the trip as well as spotting so many species! I will be back!

Trip List -

1. White-browed Titi Monkey - *Plecturocebus leucometopus*
2. Black-capped Squirrel Monkey - *Saimiri boliviensis*
3. Andean Saddle-back Tamarin - *Leontocebus leucogenys*
4. Red-Mantled Saddle-back Tamarin - *Leontocebus lagonotus*
5. Common (Guianan) Squirrel Monkey - *Saimiri sciureus*
6. Linnaeus Two-toed Sloth - *Choloepus didactylus*
7. Black Agouti - *Dasyprocta fuliginosa*
8. Aquino's Titi Monkey - *Cheracebus aquinoi*
9. Equatorial Saki Monkey - *Pithecia aequatorialis*
10. Coppery Titi Monkey - *Plecturocebus cupreus*
11. Black-mantled Saddle-back Tamarin - *Leontocebus nigricollis*
12. Southern (Eastern) Pygmy Marmoset - *Cebuella niveiventris*
13. Colombian Red Howler Monkey - *Alouatta seniculus*
14. Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth - *Bradypus variegates*
15. Large Headed Capuchin - *Sapajus macrocephalous*
16. Capybara - *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*
17. Amazon Pink River Dolphin - *Inia geoffrensis*
18. Nancy Ma Night Monkey - *Aotus nancymae*
19. Grey River Dolphin (Tucuxi) - *Sotalia fluviatilis*
20. Northern (Western) Pygmy Marmoset - *Cebuella pygmaea*
21. Greater Fishing (Bulldog) bat - *Noctilio leporinus*