

Monday, September 23 - Home at last !

This was probably the longest travel time we've experienced on one of our overseas vacations. We left Manu Wildlife Center Lodge yesterday morning before 5:00 am and were "on the road" until today, finally walking in the door on Tucson at just past 7:00 pm. That's about 38 hours of nothing but travel, with probably 4 hours of REAL sleep on the Lima to Miami flight yesterday (LOVE those "lie-flat" seats) and maybe another two in various short naps. We count waiting at airports, no matter how comfortable the lounges might be, as travel. At least our real sleep was in our "night-time" so no jet-lag, as Peru is on US eastern time. When we hit the door we are ready to crash, and that's exactly what we do.

So our travel the last two days consisted of: a considerable boat ride from Manu Wildlife Center to Colorado, a wild taxi ride from Colorado to the Rio Inambari, a short boat ride from the "boarding beach" where the boat taxi drops us off at Puerto Carlos, a van ride from Puerto Carlos to Puerto Maldonado airport, a wait, a flight from Puerto Maldonado to Lima, a long wait, flight from Lima to Miami, another long wait, flight from Miami to DFW, "semi-long" wait, flight from DFW to Tucson, and finally after retrieving our luggage a taxi ride home from the Tucson airport. A nasty business indeed!

After we are home and count up all of our wildlife sightings we find we've seen 284 bird species on this trip, and 75-80% were birds we had never seen before. Add to that some of the mammals, reptiles and butterflies we saw and this has turned out to be a fantastic trip for wildlife, to say nothing of all the fascinating archaeological and historical sites that we visited. These are all in a separate appendix to this book.

We lost the last of our two wonderful cats in February and since we were back and forth between Chicago all summer and then going to Peru, we didn't want to "replace" them (although René and Mariquita were truly irreplaceable) until we returned from Peru. By this time Ann was desperate for another cat, so we agreed that the very next weekend we would start touring the shelters to find two new cats. That first week-end we "found" Sophia, a beautiful "British Blue", and Galina, a "Dilute Tabby", cream-colored with faint gray tabby markings and the most amazing pale blue-green eyes outlined in black. Both females and beauties. Finally the house doesn't seem "empty" anymore. No one can replace Rene and Mariquite, but these quickly begin to worm their way into our hearts and our laps.

YES, we absolutely ARE cat CRAZY !!!