

We woke up early May 15 for a 6:30 breakfast. At 7 we boarded our skiffs for a short trip to a private reserve, the Amazon Natural Park. The Peruvian government approved the park in June, 2011. It is located just outside the Pacaya-Samiria Reserve on the banks of the Marañón. We docked our skiffs and transferred to what was called a catamaran to cross a quiet lagoon.



The catamarans was merely two row boats bound together by two cross beams. They were indeed very stable. After crossing the lagoon we walked on *terra firme* until we reached a platform and outhouse at the start of a suspended and elevated walkway through the mid canopy, sometimes a hundred feet up above the forest floor. The elevated walkway had 8 platforms around big tree trunks where you could rest, catch your breath and lower your pulse rate. The total length of the walkways between the platforms was over half a mile. Lynn got part way out on the first walkway, freaked and turned around, ultimately finding a ground route to our final goal with a guide.



Experiencing the canopy so far above the ground was exhilarating. At the next to last platform we were greeted by a two toed sloth hanging inches away on the support cables. This was a very rare sighting, so close-up, that our trip leader, Carlos Romero, became very excited.



Carlos was able to positively identify the sloth as a Southern Two-toed Sloth and not the very similar Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth. Probably the sloth was on its way down to (or up from) the forest floor for its weekly burial of its excreta. It was a rare chance meeting indeed.

Sloths exist in two varieties, the two-toed and the three-toed. Lynn and I had seen both in Costa Rica. In fact they should be called two-fingered and three-fingered because it is the number of digits on the front feet only that are different. All sloths have three digits on their hind feet. In toto, we have 12 toed sloths and 10 toed sloths. The claws are long, curved and strong. They can be used for self-defense very effectively. Anteaters and armadillos have similar claws and are in the superorder *Xenarthra* along with sloths.

While hiking in to the suspension bridge, a spotter caught a Rainbow Boa, a beautiful snake about 4-5 feet long. We got very close-up time with it. Note the head camouflaged at the top by the leaf litter and the tail at the mid-right.





On the hike back to the catamarans after the suspension bridge walk we roused a Tayra from his perch in a nearby tree. He ran down the tree and off into the forest. Tayras are in the weasel family, hard to see but not uncommon. The picture below is from an animal park photo.



We also observed Saddle-backed Tamarins in the trees. We would see many during the trip.



A Helicopter Damselfly was another fun sighting. Its wings moved alternately.



In the afternoon we explored Yanayaquillo Cañon. It was narrow and bounded on both sides by very tall trees, like a canyon. We saw more Green Kingfishers, a Slate-backed Hawk, a troop of Saddle-backed Tamarins, and three types of Toucan, the Lettered Aracari, the Chestnut-eared Aracari (below)



and Cuvier's Toucan. Cuvier's Toucan is easily recognized by its white throat and is the biggest toucan in Peru.



A Red-throated Caracara rounded out the sightings for the day. He is perched on one leg while holding the other next to his stomach.

