

FISHES FOUND NEAR PUCALLPA, PERU



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In February 2016, Fritz Rohde, Brian Perkins and I started planning a trip to collect fishes near the city of Pucallpa, Peru. Pucallpa is a city in the Peruvian Amazon, 300 miles northeast of Lima, along the banks of the Ucayali River. Our plan was to leave in June, use Pucallpa as a home base, and employ a hub and spoke model to sample the surrounding areas. We also decided to make a stopover in Iquitos for a few days, to pick up a Peruvian friend, Jorge. Brian, Fritz and I have spent many trips collecting over the last two years, both in the United States, and in Peru, but the remoteness of some of our planned Pucallpa areas promised to make this trip unique.

After landing in Lima, Fritz and I grabbed a hotel for the night and took an early morning flight into Iquitos, with a layover in Tarapoto. Iquitos is a large city on the Amazon, famous for its ornamental fish exporting. We had some unfinished business in Iquitos from a previous trip, and within two hours of landing had our nets in the water.

When in Iquitos, a majority of our sampling is conducted along the road from Iquitos to Nauta. This road is one of the only roads that leave Iquitos, as the city is completely cut off from the rest of the country's road network, and all commerce is handled via the rivers and airport. We sampled for a couple of hours along this road, at kilometer 21, getting our bearing and sloggling through some swamps. Given that we were just getting warmed up, our catch was limited to *Crenuchus spilurus* (Crenuchidae), *Copella* sp. (Lebiasinidae), *Hemigrammus* sp. (Characidae), *Apistogramma cacatuoides* (Cichlidae), and *Rivulus rectocaudatus* (Rivulidae).

JULY 1ST: THE ROAD TO NAUTA

After a quick breakfast, we met up with our go-to mototaxi driver, Yuri, as well as Brian and Jorge. Our first stop was a creek hidden away in a stand of practically inaccessible trees

at the local university aquaculture facility. The facility was roughly eight air miles southwest of the city center, on the northeast shores of Laguna de Quistococha. To access the facility, a dirt road runs from the main highway to a dirt parking lot 200m into the jungle. From there it was another 300m of trail and bushwhacking with the help of a local man and his machete. Upon arrival, Fritz stopped to record our GPS location, while Brian and I got right to fishing. My first swipe netted a knifefish (Gymnotidae), which are called "macana" by the locals, but was new to us. Further fishing revealed a second species of knifefish, a potentially undescribed *Rivulus* of the *ornatus* complex, as well as a few *R. rectocaudatus*.

Our next site was about 100m to the southwest, and a climb of 31m in elevation. This may not sound difficult, but in the heat and humidity of the jungle, it felt like summiting a much warmer Everest. There was a clear rainwater pool at the top of this hill, full of *R. rectocaudatus*, and we took some underwater video. We encountered no new species here so we packed out all of our collected fish to photograph them.

Getting back on the road was a welcome event, as the steady 30mph of the mototaxi was the equivalent to a jungle air conditioner. Our next stop was some land where Jorge had dug a pond for some unidentified *Rivulus* that he caught a few weeks prior, and wanted us to take a shot at identifying them. The pond was more of a puddle, roughly eight feet in diameter, deeper than my net could reach, and full of nonnative guppies. We did manage to catch a few of the *Rivulus*, although they just appeared to be large *Rivulus rubrolineatus*, a very common *Rivulus* in the area. We kept two to photograph and then headed back out to the highway.

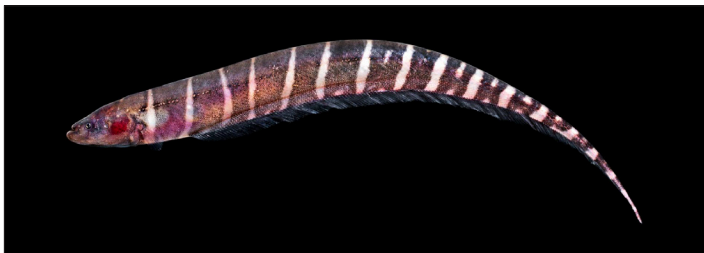
Our next stop was a 20-minute ride south along the highway. This was a very inconspicuous roadside ditch, and other than seeing a large roadkill boa constrictor, was not very memorable. We waded into the ditch, and caught dozens of *R. rubrolineatus*, but nothing new. At this point, we were starting to get tired; the tropical climate has a way of really taking it out of you, so we decided to break for lunch. However, after driving only a mile back towards town, another creek caught our attention, and once again we stopped to fish. This creek was a murky light brown, and like much of Peru, strewn with trash. Fritz and Brian ventured out across

Photos by the author unless otherwise indicated.

Scott Smith is a lifelong fisherman, amateur photographer, and fisheries biologist with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. He is on a personal mission to photograph as many species of fish as he possibly can, and spends entirely too much time and money towards that endeavor. Aside from fish, Scott is an avid surfer and recently picked up mountain biking.

what seemed like a waist-deep creek, only to find it closer to neck deep, while Jorge and I fished the edges. We managed a few new tetras and one interesting cichlid. After about an hour here, we got back on the road for lunch.

Lunch was a local affair, as we stopped at a roadside establishment that served fresh-caught fish, unidentified cat-like bush meat, and little live palm grubs on a stick. Inter-



July 1 fishes (from top): *Rivulus rubrolineatus*, Sailfin Tetra (*Crenuchus spilurus*), *Gymnotus* sp., Spotted Tetra (*Copella natterei*), and *Apistogramma* sp.

estingly, we encountered a few species of fish at this market that we had not yet encountered in the wild, including a sci-aenid, and a large *Mylossoma* species (Serrasalminidae). The live grubs were an interesting item, and although we are generally in favor of experiencing new cultures and norms, we could not manage to find it within us to try any.

Since we were on a mission, lunch was short, and we quickly got back on the road. Our next stop was in a new town, Zungaro Cocha, that neither Fritz nor I had ever visited. Zungaro Cocha is an unassuming town, roughly three miles down a dirt road west of the university. It is important to point out that although three miles may not seem like a long way, in Peru, three miles is an adventure in itself. After dodging Volkswagen-sized potholes and muddy bogs that swallowed trucks three times our size, we arrived at our site. This site was an unnamed creek, which served as a watering hole for the locals, and we sidestepped bathers and women washing clothing in order to fish. The creek yielded various unidentified tetras, *Aquidens* spp. (Cichlidae), *R. rectocaudatus*, and a few needlefish. After we had sampled a large portion of this creek, we found an abandoned restaurant, in which we setup our photography gear. It was at this point that we realized the bumpy road had claimed the life of our photography tanks, and so we opted to head back to the hotel, fish in hand, to make repairs.

JULY 2ND: DELAYS AND BOAT TRIPS

“Jungle time” is a phrase we soon learned all too well on this trip; to Peruvians, meeting at 0900 means sometime between 0900 and 1100. Today we started out early to be the first people in line when our favorite restaurant, Dawn on the Amazon, opened for breakfast. We had planned on meeting Brian at 9, then catching a boat up an unnamed creek to an undisclosed location where Brian and Jorge had discovered an odd, red *Corydoras* catfish a few months prior. After breakfast, our taxi driver Yuri showed up, but Brian was nowhere to be found. Jorge and I have a mutual understanding of how each other thinks, and are able to communicate very effectively through my broken Spanish. Yuri and I have no such understanding, which left Fritz and I in a very confusing situation. After about



The waterfront in Belen.



Heading up the creek in search of the red *Corydoras*.

an hour of waiting, we were able to get ahold of Brian, who had unfortunately come down with a rough case of food poisoning. After numerous comments about the weird stuff we had eaten for lunch at that roadside stand the previous day, we agreed to meet up with Jorge and travel to the boat. On our way to the dock, Jorge asked if we would like to stop and see a friend of his who runs a fish-exporting business. We agreed, and were greeted by a Chinese national “Marvin,” and given an in-depth tour of his facility. After the tour, we decided to go for lunch, and then finally proceed to the dock. The dock was in a part of town known as Belen, on the banks of the Rio Itaya. It is a district known for its extreme poverty, where all the buildings sit up on stilts to keep them above the mean flood height. There is no sewer or water system in this district of 65,000 people, so the river works as both. We met our boat on the banks of the river, loaded our gear and set off having no real idea where we were going, trusting Jorge.

The trip took us about 10 miles up a creek off the Itaya. The creek was a blackwater creek, 20 feet wide at its best, and full



July 2 fishes: *Gymnotus* sp. (top) and Common Hatchetfish (*Gasteropelecus sternicla*).

of tree limbs. We stopped at a trailhead that Jorge was looking for, but the trail was invisible due to overgrowth. Lacking a machete, we opted to collect at a different location, and carried all of our gear about a half-mile walk down a muddy trail to the south. Since it was so late in the day by the time we started fishing, we only managed about two hours before we had to head back. Nevertheless, we managed *Copeina gutatta* (Lebasiinidae), hatchetfish, *Copella* sp., three tetras, and a knife-fish.

JULY 3: TRIP TO PUCALLPA

After another breakfast at Dawn on the Amazon, we packed up and headed to the airport. Our scheduled flight to Pucallpa was a short two-hour hop, and after meeting Brian and Jorge at the airport, we moved through the lax security, boarded the plane and were back on the ground in no time. We met Brian and Jorge at the airport, moved through the lax security, and were back on the ground quickly. Upon landing, we were surprised to learn that the power was out for the entire city, and since many establishments use electric water pumps, water was out too. After hailing a taxi, we went to visit some relatives of Jorge’s, and headed out to get some lunch. Luckily, we found many barbecue joints here that were able to serve us even without power, and after a lunch of chicken, rice, yucca, and soda, we headed out. Our destination was a popular recreational lake, Yarina Cocha, where we hoped to find our first new species of the trip. Initially we sampled the edges of the lake, which was brown water covered in water lettuce, but soon after Jorge had secured us a local canoe. We had a decent success rate at this lake, securing a small unknown tetra, two *Moenkhausia* spp., *Tetragonopterus argenteus*, *Hyphessobrycon* sp. (Characidae), *Triportheus angulatus* (Triporthetidae), *Schizodon fasciatus* (Anostomidae), a juvenile Prochilodontid, and a *Mesonauta festivus* (Cichlidae).

JULY 4: FIRST FULL DAY IN PUCALLPA

Today started out incredibly slow, as a deal Jorge had made for a truck and driver the night before fell through. By 1100, we were on the road with a little compact four-door, with five adult men and fishing gear squeezed in. Our plans for the day were to drive to the town of Campo Verde and take the dirt road south to Tournavista. We had read some collection notes of a German expedition in the 1980s that had some success collecting the killifish, *Moema* sp., outside Tournavista, and we wanted to retrace their route. The road to Tournavista was a dirt and rock road, 36.5 miles long, and would probably be impassible in the rain. Our first site was a small creek at the bottom of a ravine, roughly one mile down the road. The creek had some puddles along the edges, and appeared to be prime *Rivulus* habitat, however we struck out on killies, but still landed *Apistogramma* sp., *Aequidens* sp., *Hoplias* sp., *Hoplerethrinus* sp.



July 3 fishes: *Tetragonopterus argenteus* (top) and *Schizodon fasciatus*.

(both in Erythrinidae), *Copella vilmae*, and a poison dart frog *Epipedobates hahneli*.

After about an hour of collecting, we continued down the road, stopping at random intervals looking for potential creeks and waterbodies. Our next stop was three miles further down, and was a habitat known locally as a “quebrada.” Quebradas are easy to spot from the road, because they contain a certain species of palm tree in close proximity to each other. These palms, according to the locals, must have their roots growing in water, which then works for us as a beacon for *Rivulus* habitat. This spot produced male and female *Rivulus* sp., *Characidium* sp. (Crenuchidae), two *Apistogramma* spp., three tetras, a crab, *Hoplosternum* sp., and *Callichthys* sp. (both in Callichthyidae).

Our next stop was a further 1.5 miles down the road, and though it produced a *Hoplosternum* sp., *Copeina* sp. cf. *guttata*, *Apistogramma* sp., and an *Aequidens* sp., we encountered nothing new. At this point, we decided to stop sampling every little ditch we passed and instead attempted to make some progress towards Tournavista.

There was not much to this plan, however, after only another eight miles we hit some major road construction. This was definitely unexpected, as there was not much of a road to begin with, and after talking a bit with the attractive young woman holding the stop sign, we discovered this was the end of our trip today. Not quite ready to give up, we fanned out into the surrounding jungle and quickly located a potentially new species of *Rivulus* dubbed *Rivulus* sp. cf. *rubrolineatus* “Blue eyes” in our field notes. After answering many questions regarding our seemingly odd behavior to the natives, we made an about-face to try and hit some of the smaller creeks we passed earlier.



July 4 fishes (from top): *Rivulus* site 12 female, *Rivulus* site 12 male, *Rivulus* site 10 male, *Otocinclus*, *Aequidens tetramerus*, and *Apistogramma* sp. near Pucallpa.



Poison Dart Frog (*Epipedobates hahneli*).

Our thirteenth site of the trip was 5.3 miles back towards Campoverde, and was a small river with a white, sandy, bottom. Known as the Rio Blanco, this river served as a recreational site and a laundromat to the locals. We managed an unidentified tetra, *Astyanax abramis*, *Hyphessobrycon* sp. (both in Characidae), *Carnegiella schereri* (Gasteropelecidae), *Characidium* sp., *Farlowella* sp., *Otocinclus* sp. (all in Loricariidae), and an unidentified species of the freshwater shrimp genus *Macrobrachium*. At this point, the sun was setting and our driver recommended that we not stay on this road after dark, so we headed back to experience some city life.

JULY 5: TINGO MARIA

Today we got up early, with the intention of heading to the city of Tingo Maria. Tingo Maria is a small city roughly 120 miles west of Pucallpa, in the Cordillera Azul range. The Cordillera Azul range is full of misty cloud forests, rare flora, waterfalls, and with any luck, new fishes. We had discussed this trip in some detail the previous night, given the road has a history of armed bandits stopping cars and buses, and robbing them, and is off limits to US State Department employees. In the end, we opted to rent a local truck and try our luck, as the areas along the highway are rarely if ever sampled. Once again, we were unable to secure a truck, and had to settle for a four-door compact Toyota and driver. Our concern over the road quickly turned to concern over the car, as the tires were so bare they were blushing, and the driver so sketchy, we were not sure we would return alive. We were taking blind mountain curves in the wrong lane while speeding, and it was at this point that I was glad Fritz had won the coin toss for the front seat, but the look on his face said he was not savoring his win. At one point the driver was going too fast (egged on by a passing motorist) so Fritz and Brian yelled at the man to slow down, forever etching the phrase “*despacio amigo!*” into my vocabulary bank.

We arrived at our first site in one piece welcomed by cool mountain air, an amazing array of orchids, misty mountains, and a crystal-clear, boulder-strewn river. The name of the river is a bit hazy, as different maps use different designations, but it is either the Rio Aguatia, or the Rio Yuracyacu. Excited by

the change in habitat, we all went our separate ways, nets in hand. Fritz and Brian headed out to the main river, while Jorge and I decided we would look for killifishes in the jungle. We found many small pools amongst the leaf litter, and plenty of *Macrobrachium* sp., but nothing in the way of fishes. Moving on, we located a secondary stream, roughly 15-foot wide, that came down the side of one of the mountains and met the main river somewhere below us. We sampled this stream for about an hour, locating plenty of new loricariids and a few unidentified tetras.

After another hour, we all converged on the main river, where many truck-sized pools were scattered along the banks. In the pools, we located a number of unidentified tetras and Incan Stonefish, *Tahuantinsuyo macantzata* (Cichlidae). For the next hour, we shot some underwater video and collected whatever we could, then proceeded to photograph and prepare for our next site. We ended up shooting 17 species, and were only able to identify the Incan Stonefish out of the lot.

Next, we quickly packed our gear, loaded up the Toyota, and headed up the mountain. Unfortunately, for us, a rock slide blocked our progress after about 10 minutes of driving. This gave us the opportunity to get out of the car, and experience the “Ducha Del Diablo,” a large waterfall that cascades down the side of the mountain. We would have liked to have stayed longer, except the work crews were about finished clear-



Saddleback Tamarin attacking Fritz's boot before actively climbing up his leg!



Cordillera Azul in the background.

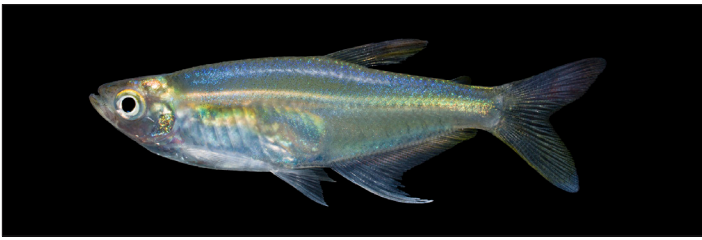
ing the rock slide, and the 10 miles of backed up traffic getting ready to head down the mountain made us think otherwise. We speedily, and may I remind you of the earlier paragraph regarding our driver, headed back down.

Our next collection site was a haphazard stop after passing a creek on our way into Aguatia. We motioned our driver to pull over, and after looking at the creek on foot, decided to sample. Fritz took a dipnet and headed to the south side of the road, sampling in an open area full of aquatic vegetation area. Brian and I headed into the jungle on the north side,

looking for puddles and side creeks that may house killifishes. Our initial net swipes produced some incredible solid gold tetras about an inch long, and a few golden *Aequidens* sp. At this point, our determination paid off, as we found some secondary creeks, and proceeded to catch a beautiful little *Rivulus* sp. that was unlike any we had seen to date. As we headed back to the car, we met up with Fritz, who had done really well, having caught *Moenkhausia agnesae*, *Aequidens* sp., *Characidium* sp., and a black *Characidium* sp. We headed back to the car to begin photographing and documenting the catch.



July 5 fishes (left column, from top): *Tahuantinsuyoa macantzatza*, unknown, unknown 2, unknown 4, *Rivulus* near Tingo, (above, from top): Bristlenose Catfish (*Ancistrus* sp.), Gold Tetra (*Hemigrammus* sp.), Whiptail catfish (*Rineloricaria* sp.), and Red-striped Moenkhausia (*Moenkhausia agnesae*).



July 6 fishes (from top): unknown, Pictus Catfish (*Pimelodus pictus*), and The Jumping Fish (*Prochilodon nigricans*).

It was at this point, on the side of the road, that our worst fears came true. In the blink of an eye, an unknown assailant was holding us up. I say unknown, but luckily, Fritz recognized the thief, and explained to us that it is a saddleback tamarin. The small monkey was active, at one point climbing up Fritz's leg before rummaging through our car looking for all things edible. After a small bribe of peanuts and dried fruit, and a small push from a tripod, we convinced the monkey to leave our car, and we headed back down the road for the night.

JULY 6: A BOAT RIDE

Today we decided we had had enough of driving and opted to rent a boat to explore some of the Rio Ucayali. Jorge had set out early and met some fishermen who agreed to take us to a special place where he catches fishes for export. Fritz and I wandered around Pucallpa on foot, looking for a grocery store, and loaded up on snacks and water to bring with us. The boat ride was about three hours in length, and louder than a jet engine at takeoff. After arriving at our site, we quickly became aware that something had been lost in translation, and our driver thought we were just taking a sight-seeing tour. This was initially a big letdown, but we made the best of it and managed to photograph a sailfin catfish that a local fisherman was removing from his gillnet, and a



Heading up the Rio Ucayali.

small knifefish. After explaining to the captain again what it was we were after, we set off looking for suitable habitat. It is worth mentioning that along the way, Fritz bravely threw himself in front of a jumping fish, taking one for the team and saving a sleeping Brian from certain disfigurement, or at least a nice bruise! The scene was reminiscent of videos of the Silver Carp in the Mississippi, and is how we added one more fish, a prochilodid, to our collection.

Our next stop was just around the corner about three miles up the river, on a large sand bank. Here we broke out our seines, dipnets, and cast nets, looking for everything from catfishes to sting rays. This was an enjoyable beach, and we managed a lot of new, unidentified fish species, as well as sighting numerous grey dolphins, storks, and frigate birds. Since they were unknown to us, we made up little names in order to keep the photographs in line with our field notes. Since most of these are still unidentified, here is the list as they appear in the field notes:

<u>Photograph #</u>	<u>Species</u>
83	Redtailed Tetra
84	Rainbow Tetra
85	Little Tetra w/ Reddish Tail
86	Little Tetra w/ Yellow Eye
87	Big Silver Prochilodid
88	Menhaden-ish
89	Rainbow Tetra #2
90	Hatchetfish
91	Little Blue Tetra
92	Large Redfined Prochilodid
93	Large Silvery
94	Caudal Bars Catfish
95	Pim Blochii

At this point, there were some rather large, ominous thunderstorms moving in, so we headed back to Pucallpa for the night.

JULY 7: AFTER THE RAIN

Last night we experienced an absolute deluge, and we were concerned about flooding. As with each previous morning

in Pucallpa, our morning started with breakfast in the hotel lobby. The routine was simple: an attendant approached us, and asked us some question in Spanish, which we barely understood due to her strong accent, I would translate what I could to Fritz, we would make our choices and she would walk off. She would then approach a little hole in the wall, where a disembodied arm would reach out and hand her our order. We never really received what we thought we had ordered, but the food was decent regardless. Being that we could not see the mysterious cook behind the wall, we avoided the juice option (or at least that is what I think it was) since the local water had a less-than-stellar reputation.

After breakfast, Jorge showed up with what he promised would be a better car and driver, and I'll be damned if it wasn't. We loaded up, excited that we were in a car with seatbelts and tire tread, and headed off down Highway 18C, west of town. Our goal today was to sample some of the roadside ditches that we had encountered along this road on previous trips, but had not had the time to explore. Our first stop was about a mile and a half outside of Campoverde at a large pond on the side of the road. After securing permission from the landowner, we proceeded to sample. Sometime earlier in the trip, I had noticed that Fritz had tucked his pants in to his socks and shoes. I thought this was odd but paid it no mind until about an hour into sampling this pond, when I felt a biting sensation on my stomach. In quick succession another 15 or so bites followed, and before I knew what was going on I was in agonizing pain. It turns out that in the jungle, ants tend to crawl up on tall grass after a night of rain in an attempt to avoid the rising waters. At first, we were not sure it was actually ants, as they were so small they were indistinguishable from the flecks of dirt that also covered me. No one really took me seriously for the first five minutes until Jorge and Fritz both received a few bites on exposed extremities, and we made a hasty retreat. Our collection efforts lead to two new tetras, two *Pyrrhulina* spp. (Lebiasinidae), a scorpion, and some very sore bites.

Our next site was a bridge over a muddy creek, covered in some aquatic vegetation, about eight miles further down. This was one of our better sites, and the diversity was fantastic. We sampled for about an hour, catching *Moenkhausia* sp., *Apistogramma* sp., *Hoplias* sp., *Characidium* sp., *Metynnis* sp., and various unidentified tetras labeled as whitefin tetra, golden tetra, split tail tetra, and golden tetra #2.

Moving on, we detoured on the word of our driver, down a dirt road near the village of Neshuya. This road led us through a palm oil plantation, so no one was optimistic, but we trudged through nonetheless. We stopped at a small creek 1.9 miles from the intersection with 18C and managed to catch a *Macrobrychium* sp., "blue eye tetra," "red eye tetra," a fish simply dubbed "menhaden," an unidentified knifefish, an unidentified crab, an unidentified catfish, and a *Callichthys* sp. We



July 7 fishes (from top): *Rivulus* Site 23, *Moenkhausia* sp., *Erythrinus* sp., *Hemigrammus* sp., and unknown cichlid.

drove another mile and technically sampled two other sites, but our time there was so brief, we did not even bother recording the locations. Feeling discouraged with the oil plantation, we opted to head back out onto 18C, and continue exploring.

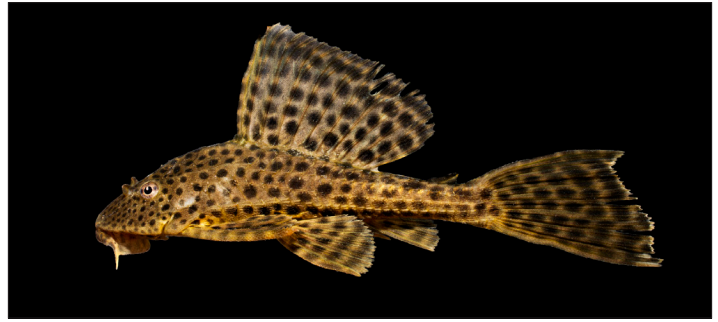
Our next stop was substantially different habitat from the others and was challenging to reach. Our driver knew of a road that leads out of the back of the village of Alexander Von Humboldt, which was supposedly secluded and full of streams. This dirt road had no obvious names, but from a map, it clearly runs east out of the back of the town and continues for many miles. The road cost us two Nuevo Soles to drive on, and was complete with a hand-operated toll arm. There were very little signs of habitation, but there were many fields for grazing. Our first stop along this road was a creek 4.5 miles down it, as we decided to drive towards the end, then work our way back. The water here was as muddy as the road and a light brownish-red color. We fished it for probably 30 minutes, and caught an unknown cichlid, *Roeboides* sp. (Characidae), *Moenkhausia* sp., and a pair of unidentified *Rivulus* sp. The collection of the *Rivulus* really got us energized and we decided to start working our way back towards the beginning, stopping at each creek that looked decent. Unfortunately, other than a *Macrobrachium* sp., and one small tetra, we caught nothing else new to us, and called it a night.

JULY 8: BACK TO TOURNAVISTA

Today we decided to head back towards Tournavista, down the dirt road we attempted to take a few days prior. Hoping that construction had finished and that the rain on previous days did not turn the road to mud, we headed out. A friend of Brian's from Arizona, Scott Jacobsen (an Arizona NANFA Rep), who had flown in to attempt some collecting of his own, joined us today. However, the road had other plans, and after getting within three miles of the town, we encountered a mud puddle large enough to conceal a whale. There was no chance of making it through, so we turned around and headed for the first creek we could find and decided to fish our way back.

Our first stop was a green, duckweed-covered swamp at the convergence of two creeks. We sampled here for about an hour, and collected a new *Rivulus* sp., two specimens of *Apistogramma* sp., and a *Hoplosternum* sp.

Our next site was two miles down the road and was a small roadside creek. Just before the creek, we stumbled upon a lost sloth trying to cross the road, and we stopped for pictures. This site was a waist-deep creek, strewn with branches and rocks. We were pleasantly surprised by the species diversity here; it included a *Characidium* sp., two unidentified species of tetra, *Crenicichla* sp. (Cichlidae), *Roeboides* sp., two loricarids, and a *Corydoras* species with a metallic green hue. This site represented a break in the typical fishes for the area and was a welcome change of pace.



July 8 fishes (from top): *Loricaridae*, *Corydoras* sp., *Characidium* sp.

Next on our stop was a quebrada roughly two miles further down. This site was shallow, with hand-sized rocks scattered around. We managed to collect a potentially new species of *Rivulus* sp. cf. *rubrolineatus*, with brilliant blue eyes, as well as an unidentified tetra and a new unidentified cichlid. We spent a total of 45 minutes exploring this site before moving on.

Since it was starting to get late in the day, we opted to try to put some distance between Tournavista and us, and moved a full 19.5 miles down the road before stopping at our next site. This site was a roadside swamp and was not very productive; we landed a *Callichthys* sp. and moved on. The next site was equally bad as we managed only a *Copeina* sp. and an *Apistogramma* sp. before stopping for the day and heading back to civilization.

JULY 9: OUR LAST DAY

This was our last day in Pucallpa, but our plane did not leave until that evening, so like any good collectors, we headed out into the jungle. This time, we wanted to try some of the dirt roads that intersected 18C, and ran to the north. Our driver knew of a good one just outside of Pucallpa, and so off we set. Our first stop was a quebrada like all the others in Peru, but this one produced a potential new species of killifish, in the



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth

Rivulus ornatus complex. This Riv was clearly different from typical *ornatus* in that its spots formed rows similar to *rubrolineatus*.

Our next stop was a mile further down the road, in a large swampy area. We managed a few repeat species, such as Apistos, splash tetras, and tetras, but we also managed a new *Rivulus* sp. cf. *ornatus*, even more different than the one caught at our previous stop. This time we only managed to capture a male. The next few sites we stopped at, we caught the same things, so did not bother recording or photographing them, and instead left the area for greener pastures.

Our next site was further down 18C, off a side dirt road with no name. We fished a small creek down this road, which produced a decent array of fishes. We were happy landing an Apisto or two, a fish we dubbed a “hatchet tetra,” and a “gold tetra with yellow fins,” but the real treat came when Fritz exclaimed that we should all be very jealous. My interest piqued, I followed his voice to find him holding the brightest blue *Apistogramma* sp. that I have ever seen. He had a pair, one male and one female, and although both were blue, the male was truly something else, and I knew immediately we would have trouble topping that catch (we are a competitive bunch).

Our second to last stop was a roadside ditch, where we caught many repeat offenders and a new tetra. Our very last

collection stop of this trip was a river crossing on 18C, where we netted a new tetra, and as a fitting last fish, a gorgeous new *Rivulus* sp. cf. *ornatus*. This Riv was by far my personal favorite of the trip and in lieu of an explanation, I will simply let the photo below speak for itself.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Getting off the beaten path is always a difficult thing to do, but in the end, it paid off for us in some amazing ways. I had never heard of the city of Pucallpa prior to Brian broaching the subject last February and probably would never have visited otherwise, but now I cannot wait to get back. In the end, we managed 154 species, with potentially five new to science. With new fish seemingly around every corner, it really is a species hunter’s paradise.



July 9 fishes (from top): *Rivulus* cf. *ornatus* male, *Rivulus* cf. *ornatus* female, *Apistogramma* blue female, *Apistogramma* blue male.



The Old Geezer, aka Fritz, dipnetting for *Rivulus*.