

Wild Discovery In Peru

Green-winged macaw pair treats scarlet chick as one of its own

By Aimy Cáceres and Donald Brightsmith

On April 28th 2007, just like every other morning at the Tambopata Research Center (TRC), we woke up at 4:30 am to count the parrots at the clay lick. It was an unusually cold morning. Perhaps a cold front, or friaje, was moving in. For a couple of days we had been having cloudy and cold weather, and the day before it had rained all day. Everyone was sleepy (big surprise), but some coffee and cookies helped us wake up a bit. The macaw project team — composed of Adrián Sánchez, Henrique Costa, Jessica Adams, and I (Aimy Cáceres) — prepared the gear and started walking toward the port down the dark trail.

We arrived to the clay lick at 5:20 am. But it was foggy, and the birds started using the clay lick around 6:30 am, when the fog finally disappeared.

For the last month we had been working on a new project. Every time a group of three or more green-winged macaws, blue-and-gold macaws or scarlet macaws arrived at the clay lick, we tried to determine if it was a family or just a group of “friends” traveling together. For each group we tried to determine: How many young; How many adults; How did you identify the bird as a young one?, etc. Usually the young were recognizable by the dark iris, short tail, small body and clumsy flight.

Around 7:00 am we saw three red macaws arriving in the area. We were confused because, even though one of them was calling like a scarlet macaw, I could definitely see some green on the wings of the other two.

****For the full article, pick up the October 2007 issue of BIRD TALK****

Did you like this excerpt? Subscribe now to read more like it.