

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

## REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/  
Conference Title:** Operation Wallacea

**Travel Dates:** 15/06/14 – 15/07/14

**Location:** Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve, Peru

**Group member(s):** Gyda Fenn-Moltu

**Aims:** Wildlife conservation and biodiversity monitoring

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### **OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-**

The Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve is one of the largest protected areas in Peru, and the flooded forests here are home to an exceedingly diverse flora and fauna. Operation Wallacea are working in the area collecting data to forward sustainable resource use by the Cocama Indians living in the reserve, and also to examine the impacts of climate change and human disturbances in the Amazon rainforest. Long-term data sets are being gathered by monitoring the populations of key terrestrial and aquatic indicator species.

As a research assistant we took part in a number of research projects, including terrestrial transects and setting camera traps for primates, large mammals and game birds, point counts of macaws, habitat surveys, river transects of wading birds, mist netting for understory birds, river dolphin transects, fish surveys using gill nets to mimic the techniques used by the local people, nocturnal surveys capturing and/or identifying caimans, and fishing bat surveys, as well as assisting dissertation studies gathering data on primate behaviour. Taking part in the research projects was not only a valuable experience of practical field work, but also of the specific survey techniques used to monitor biodiversity. We also learned a lot about the ecology of the area from both biologists and the local guides who have lived their entire lives here and have a vast knowledge of this ecosystem. We were given talks from the biologists working with OpWall on the species that are found in the area, survey techniques, and some very helpful lectures on data analysis and statistics.

For the first two weeks we took part in all of the projects on a rota basis as well as being given an introduction to Amazonian wildlife ecology, but for the remaining time we got to sign up for those projects that particularly interested us. While I still joined most of the projects every now and then, I spent most of my time with the large mammal transects, the group setting camera traps and on the dolphin surveys. The expedition to Peru provided the opportunity to meet motivated people in the same field of study, and living for an extended period of time in such a remote place and in a relatively confined space really brought people together as a group. The grant from the Rennie bequest has gone towards covering my travel costs this summer, which again has allowed me to experience the beautiful and diverse wildlife of the Amazon rainforest hands on, to gain experience of field work in an area important for biodiversity, and given me a truly unforgettable experience.