


[Home »](#)[About Us](#)[What We Do »](#)[Achievements »](#)[Help WVS »](#)[Members »](#)[WTS »](#)[Objectives »](#)[History »](#)[Trips 2009 »](#)[Contact »](#)

Report for trip started 10/05/2008 to Amazon CARES

By Keara Brennan

10/06/2008

A WVS volunteer vet in Peru

Trip Report WVS Vets 17th May – 24th May 2008

What can I say, an utterly incredible week in Iquitos!

Arriving at the airport, I was immediately impressed by the helpfulness and friendliness of the police, tourist staff and taxi drivers. I say taxi, I mean of course the ubiquitous Iquitan 'moto-taxi' – a noisy but consistently entertaining mode of transport with free foot massage included!

This first impression was surpassed by the enthusiastic welcome by the Amazon CARES team. After my first taste of cebiche (a must-try) and some exhausted attempts at Spanish (and French) I disappeared for some much-needed sleep. In my groggy state, it was great to meet and chat with Jo, the next WVS vet to arrive. We re-awakened our surgical training with a few neuterings on the Saturday and were pleased to learn the excellent, well-organised set up which Esther (Amazon CARES vet) had developed. Many UK practices would pay excellent money for the Amazon CARES team. The combination of Esther's support, enthusiasm and surgical skill with the efficiency, attention to detail and helpfulness of Bethjane and energetic, smiley enthusiasm of Harry is a real dream team to work with. We were a little hindered by our basic Spanish skills but nothing a few smiles and 'como se dice's?' couldn't get over.

We greeted Kate, another WVS vet with the now familiar enthusiasm and caught another early night. I made an early start to Belen market

on Sunday morning and was most impressed by the acceptance of the locals despite being the only gringa there. Not to mention the heady market atmosphere, numerous fruits, veg and fish I couldn't begin to name and a few meats and animals I would rather not be able to name. After breakfast we headed to Piluntapwasi a 'mariposario' (butterfly farm) near Iquitos. Our guides Bruno, and his girlfriend Lily, were wonderful companions. Friendly, kind and keen to surpass the language barrier! We stopped at Bellavista market and tasted some local delicacies, most notably some fat juicy grubs and more un-namable fruit and veg. Our arrival at the butterfly farm was greeted by four noisy, inquisitive and very friendly monkeys with their owner. We enjoyed a guided tour of the rescued macaws, ant-eater, tapir, jaguar and sloths followed by an education on butterfly farming and the most spectacular electric blue (and many other coloured) butterflies. I think the majority of our time was then spent mutual grooming the farm's rescued, domesticated monkeys and enjoying a rare glimpse of the resident manatee and turtles.

We enjoyed a meal of local fish overlooking the Amazon and then met Tamsin, the final WVS vet before making the trip in the Amazon CARES speedboat to Cabo Lopez. And what a trip! Through the outskirts of Belen (with a couple of minor detours in the dark!) and arriving at a beautiful jungle lodge. All our needs were amply met by Marlina, the housekeeper at Cabo Lopez and we quickly cemented a great vet team spirit over a few Cuba Libres!

On Monday we started our week's work at Padre Cocha. The boat trip was an adventure in itself and arriving at the empty municipal hall I was amazed how quickly the place was turned into an impressive neutering venue. The injectable anaesthetic protocol is well developed. Ivermectin, nsoids, antibiotic, multivits and intravenous fluids are given to all animals. The support staff are very supportive (!) and whilst there is potential for improved efficiency the work ethic and enthusiasm are faultless.

Tuesday at Padre Cocha was a little less productive – it seemed we had made good progress on Monday and there were fewer animals for sterilization on Tuesday. In addition, knowing the set up really helped to speed up the process. In total we neutered 25 animals at Padre Cocha.

Wednesday we visited Belen and neutered 21 animals above the meat market. It was ironic to be neutering animals on the surfaces otherwise used to butcher them but we had a productive day and I was most impressed by the skill of Harry, Miguel and the other dog handlers.

Thursday and Friday we visited Rumococha, a new location for the AmazonCARES team. Despite this, the team were as ever unflappable and we swiftly developed a routine. Both days were productive, neutering 48 animals in total, with fewer animals on the Friday presumably due to the success of Thursday.

Every evening we have returned to the delightful Cabo Lopez for some relaxation and team building over the Cuba Libres! It is rewarding to see two of the dogs (the much loved Eddie and Flecha!) rehabilitated from the Pevas clinic and enjoying our company, looking healthier daily!

We had the weekend off work and took the opportunity to visit the local Amazonian highlights. A night out dancing al fresco with Bruno, Lily, Pai and friends was followed by a 2 hour boat trip into the Amazon. An incredible weekend followed with pink dolphins, anacondas, deadly snakes, more monkeys and very hospitable local hosts.

We've had a productive, enjoyable week so far and can't wait for another week of surgery. We hope to be able to help future volunteers by producing further protocols and notes and perhaps even a vocab list before we leave. Kate, with assistance from the rest of us, will be presenting on Emergency Medicine on Wednesday to some local vets.

It has been a productive, rewarding and entertaining week. The dogs and cats here have been remarkably friendly and with many very beautiful characters. There have of course been some sad, sad cases which I hope we have helped but also a number of cared for pets and relatively healthy street dogs. We are told independently that this improvement has only been noticeable over the past few years of AmazonCARES existence but of course there is always much more work to do.

The second week of our neutering drive in Iquitos saw us back in Belen, working above the meat market. This was a now familiar venue and as such we were able to achieve a level of efficiency and productivity that

can be difficult to achieve at a new venue. On Monday we neutered 19 animals and on Tuesday 18 animals. We also rescued a medium sized cross bred dog with a complete, complex distal femoral fracture back to the clinic at Pevas for further treatment.

On Wednesday we had a day off and headed back to Belen to take advantage of some of the photo opportunities this lively, varied market has to offer. It was rewarding to spot a couple of dogs that we had neutered the previous day back in their own habitat and enjoying the scraps which are their daily food. I have no end of admiration for the skill of the Amazon CARES team at catching these dogs and presenting them to us for sedation with minimal stress to both dog and vet! We had a really enjoyable afternoon with Esther, Miguel and the vet of the Quistococha Zoo perusing the huge variety of confiscated local species in very peaceful lakeside surroundings. On Wednesday afternoon Kate performed a mid femoral amputation of the dog rescued from Belen and we prepared for our presentation to local vets that evening. Kate had prepared a presentation on Emergency Medicine which Patricio (an Argentinian volunteer) had dedicatedly translated and Esther had printed for us. Unfortunately, with our limited Spanish, most of the talk was in English but ably translated by Patricio. Judging from the lively discussion and numerous questions after the talk I think it was a useful evening for all involved despite the language barrier!

On Thursday, we made a new venture for Amazon CARES to the local PetroPeru refinery. With the use of their boat, food and fuel it made for a more cost effective location for Amazon CARES but there were a few teething problems to overcome. The refinery is frequented by a number of local dogs and particularly cats, and they were keen to remove these animals before an impending inspection. Amazon CARES had successfully suggested that sterilization would be more humane than poisoning but the next step is to achieve this. We managed to neuter 3 dogs caught in the usual manner by the skilled team. Unfortunately, the cats proved more of a challenge. As many WVS volunteers will know, catching feral cats without the proper equipment is a nigh on impossible, and somewhat dangerous task! Nevertheless, with the help of one trap, a little ingenuity and patience we neutered 3 cats on Thursday.

On Friday we were again picked up by Petro Peru and taken to Barrio

Florido, a nearby village which a number of the dogs who frequent the refinery call home. After a frustrating morning of logistics we set up shop at the village communal location – a ‘bandstand’ type, open structure overlooking the Amazon. This made for some more photo opportunities and an interested local audience! We successfully neutered 11 dogs and 2 cats before heading back to Iquitos for our final night together. Although the numbers neutered at this location were lower than we would have hoped it was useful to scope out the location and work out the logistics for further work. I am sure, with WVS’promised equipment help, AmazonCARES can make significant inroads into improving the lives of the animals in this area.

It was lovely to meet the children and partners of the Amazon CARES staff and share some pizza together at ‘Chez Maggy’ on Friday night! Without their unending enthusiasm, smiles, practicality and initiative we would have found our project a much greater challenge. Despite our limited language skills we enjoyed a number of giggles and a great team atmosphere for the whole two weeks.

Over the weekend we have relaxed in Iquitos and Cabo Lopez and said fond farewells as the volunteer vets slowly disperse. It has been a fabulously rewarding, enjoyable two weeks made all the better by the beautiful personalities of both humans and animals we have encountered. I have no doubt that Amazon CARES has and will continue to make a very significant difference to the lives of the local animals who are very much in need at this time.