

# Wildlife Photography

A while back walking on a trail amid a thick forest of tall trees where sunlight barely reached my feet, my guide noticed subtle indistinct sounds coming from tree branches, as he raised his right hand pointing to the top of trees at a distance, he whispered, 'do you see them?'—as I was shaking my head in disagreement, suddenly my body was part of the earth, I could hear the sound of branches moving, and there they were, a flock of squirrel monkeys leaping through trees rapidly, as they were flying, clattering and chirping, crossing my eyes—as they passed in seconds my eyes were still fixed on the background of trees and the sky dissipating light in a speck of the Amazonas. People always ask me; did you take pictures? —my answer is always the same—'thousands of pictures with my eyes'.



Everyone approaches wildlife based on their program of experiences. Most travelers want to enjoy the place and the aesthetics of nature or both. Most wildlife photographers and biologists, some want to observe the behavior of plants and animals, others want to learn the environment; at any rate, the denominator I would say is observation, patience, preparation and motivation.

Always reach for the summit, waterfalls, and secluded areas. There you will find the tranquility, just nature and welcome the unexpected, a short rain brings brilliance, color and unexpected beauty.

Enjoy the photoshoot! The moment you stop is perhaps the moment where your brain is ready for great images.

For this chapter I've gathered pictures of beaches, estuaries, parks, mountains and tropical forest that are easily accessible to anyone.



Walter E. Lara. Amazonas, 2019.

## Safety Precautions

Select the right season and weather conditions to climb a mountain, walk in the forest, or dive in the ocean. The day of the week and time of the day in particular are critical to photograph wildlife.

Research the area prior to the trip and make the right contacts. Knowing the language and culture helps to find the right places and work with the right people. If you are planning to travel and travelling to uninhabited or places secure a local guide. An expert guide is someone who



knows the natural surroundings and is knowledgeable of organic matter, plants, small insects and their predators. He/she will only take you your safe places.

Wear proper clothing to protect you from the environment; hot, humid and rainy conditions are typical near estuaries, rivers, oceans and forests.



In estuaries, the ocean, springs or rivers carry your cameras inside a waterproof backpack and a small cooler to keep film, batteries and SD cards safe.

Canopy is the upper layer of a forest formed by the crowns of mature trees, playing a crucial role in the ecosystem by providing habitat, regulating climate, and supporting biodiversity.

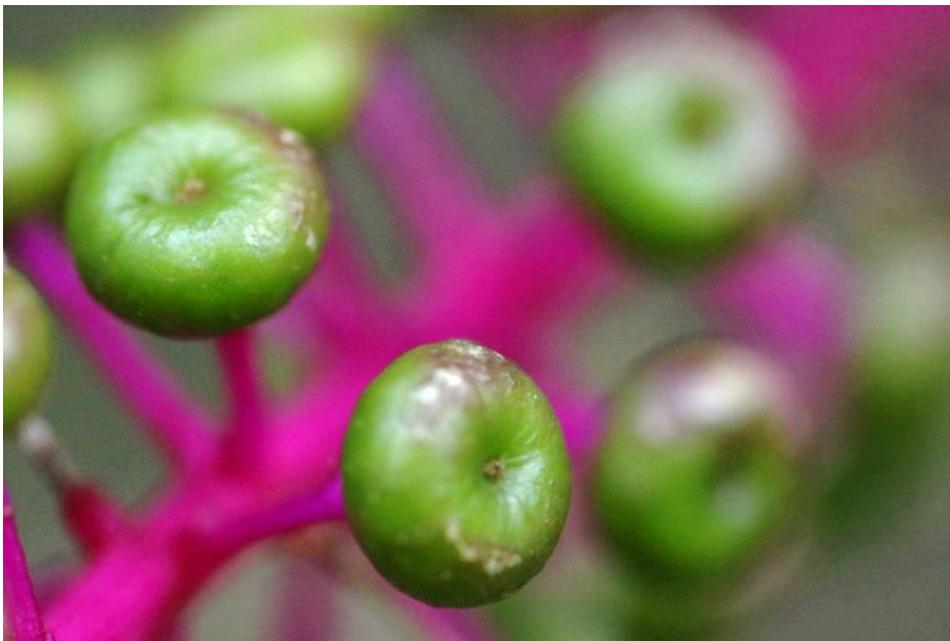


A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



BELOW colorful shrubby plants is from a diverse family of flowering plants that grows in the tropical forest of Perú.

A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Shallow depth of focus with large aperture. Canon Rebel T6s 100mm f4 @ 1/1000 sec ISO 3200.

## Estuaries

Estuaries are rich of diverse marine life, plankton, fish and crustacean species that are part of a large marine group of bivalves, including scallops and mussels. Also, a great place to meet and work photographically with marine biologists.

A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



A day in the wetland surrounded by trees, shrubs and vegetation. Walter E. Lara Guana, 2012.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Oyster Toadfish, *Opsanus tau*.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Piles of oysters. Guana National Estuarine Reserve.

Nikon Coolpix 950 with a fisheye converter lens (left) for field observation at Guana Reserve, Florida 2012.

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A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Porcelain crabs, an invertebrate Decapod from the phylum Mollusca.



Surveys of oyster reefs and marine life.



3-image stitched together created in-camera with a compact camera.



Matanzas Inlet. Whitney Laboratory for Marine Science, 2015.

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A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Matanzas Inlet, Florida.

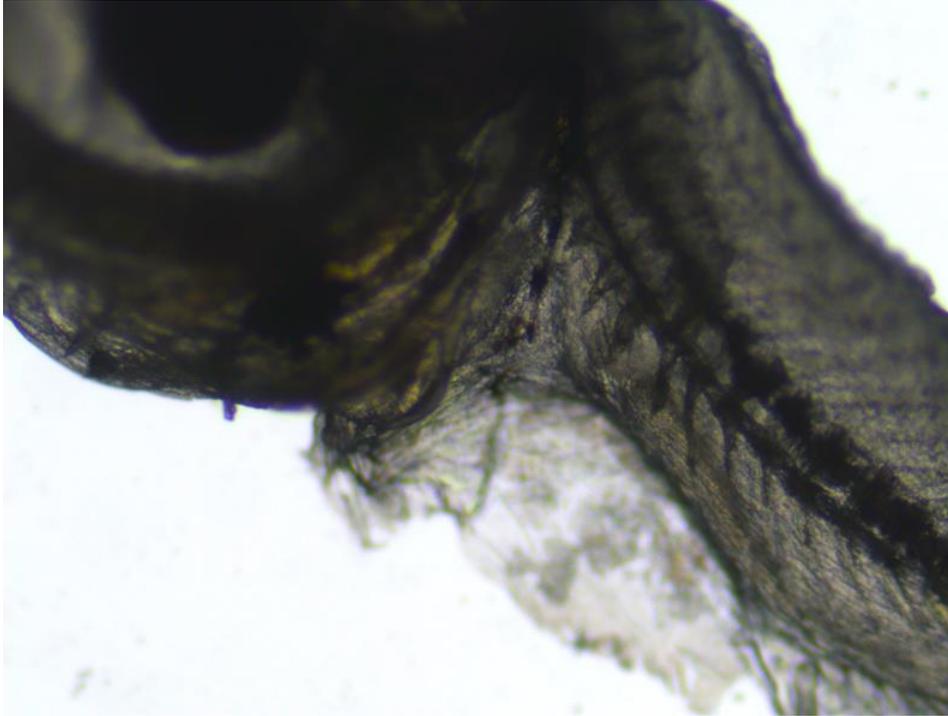


Crescent Beach, Florida.

BELOW True crabs photographed inside a tent and back-illuminated through plastic.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Larva through a compound microscope.

## Driftwood

Boneyards of driftwood on the beach formed as a result of decades of erosion. What was once a maritime forest

On the sandy shores of what once was a maritime forest is now is now a sandy shore lined with weathered tree trunks and branches laying on the sand.

Images taken at Botany Bay Plantation Wildlife Management Area South Carolina, Big Talbot Island State Park and Driftwood Beach, Georgia.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.

## Caribe

I have always been intrigued on what the lens sees through air and water. If you open your eyes in the water objects look blurry. In the water the light bends and magnifies, objects appear larger and closer. With the camera, the lens captures the reflection of the subject and determines how the light is refracted to form the image.

Underwater. photography is a thrilling and electrifying experience and a great opportunity to encounter marine life.



Any sport camera captures great images in the water. The pictures in this chapter were taken with inexpensive compact cameras in Florida east coast and the Bahamas islands.



## Safety Precautions

As with any water sport like surfing, snorkeling or diving understand the physical challenges when you are in the waters, even for experienced swimmers. The water is massive and you cannot control many movements.

The deeper you submerge the darker and larger the space gets—it takes time to adjust to the surroundings.



Some swimmers are very comfortable underwater, wear the proper gear and learn the protocols. A mask and fins to stay in equilibrium. You should always be accompanied by a crew or a partner.



## Photography

Anyone can do sports photography. You don't need to cover a large area to see what is down there. Examine the world slowly and thoroughly, it is the small and less obvious species that are the most interesting. Even at the surface you'll encounter mini ecosystems, wrecks and rocks. The ecosystems underwater are rich in salt and marine life around the coral reefs. Mollusca, algae, which attracts sea stars, fish, crabs and other critters.



Alice Island North Bimini.



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Vivitar sports camera. Bimini, 2013.

A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Canon SLR. Bimini, 2013.

A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Vivitar sports camera. Nassau, 2013.

As you submerge in the water, your senses change. A diver's mask permits the eyes to focus and see clear. Sound travels further in water than in air, which may cause some confusion. Snorkeling in shallow waters is good place to practice the use of the camera.



## Taking pictures

To gain confidence shooting underwater, go to shallow water before moving deeper. At the surface you can observe the effect of the sunlight passing through air.

A good lens and a fast shutter speed helps to capture sharp images. Use a red filter if you want to bring down the water cyan cast.



Vivitar sports camera. Nassau, 2013.

Depending on the housing size, secure the camera comfortably with two hands in the water, relax, follow the motion of the waters and keep the camera steady while taking pictures.



Vivitar sports camera. Great Exuma, 2013.

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A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



INTOVA sports camera. North end of the Great Abaco, 2013.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.

A view of the reefs fifty feet down in Bimini.

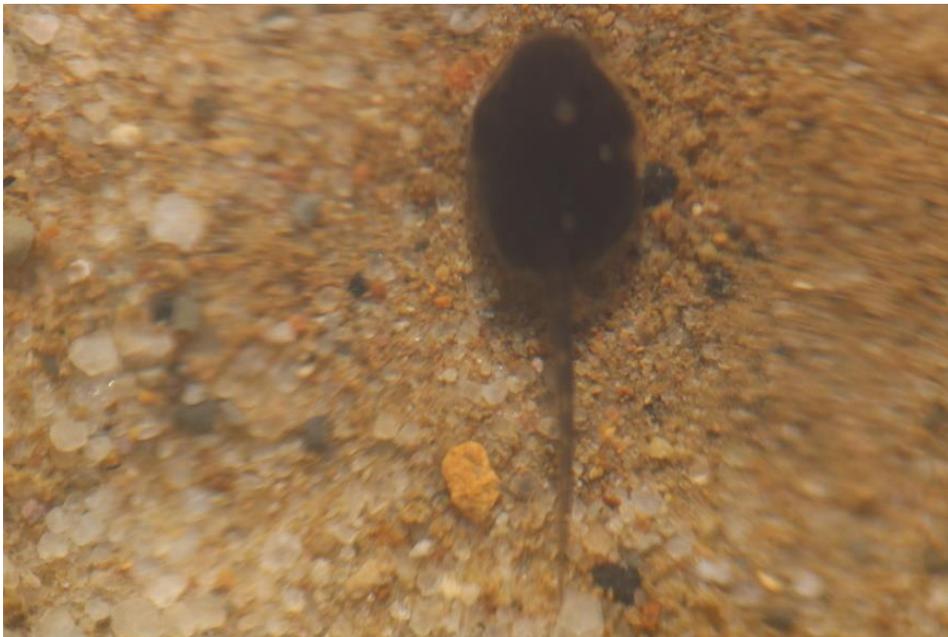


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## Rainforest

The humid tropical forests of the Amazonia ecosystems are formed at the bottom of the Andes mountains many thousands of meters below. These conditions are prone for a dynamic habitat which are critical for the development of flowers and other nutrients for insects and fungi; decomposed nutrients are recycled back to the ecosystem.

Many butterflies find nutrients along the rivers where aquatic invertebrates are connected to the terrestrial ecosystem.

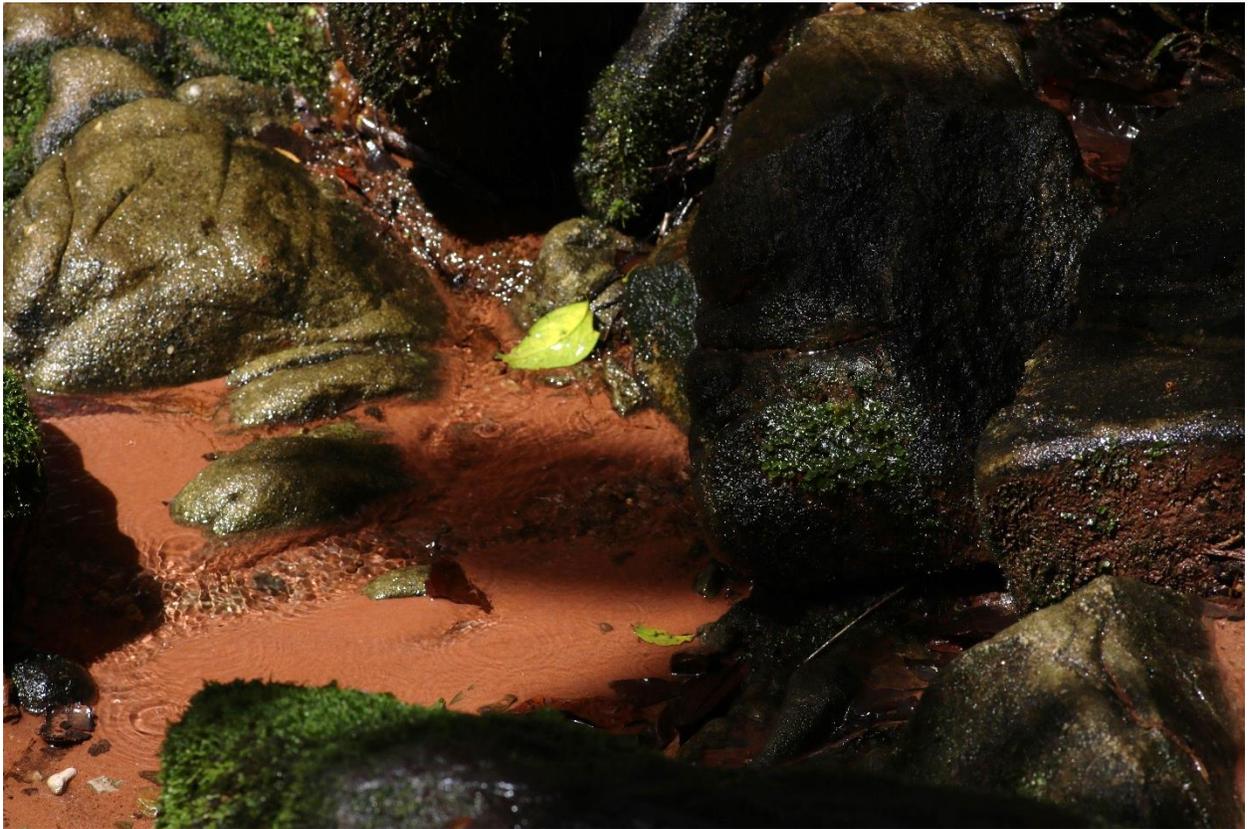




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The San Martín's region I visited has many waterfalls including Ahuashiyacu, Shapaja and Huacamaíllo. The latter waterfall can be easily reached from the picturesque village of San Antonio. There are many rock formations covered by vegetation extend along the streams to the Cumbaza river.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.

The photographic conditions are optimal under the canopy of trees. A macro lens gets you closer to tiny insects, plants and mini-ecosystems.



Tokina 100mm macro lens. f4@1/500sec ISO 1600.



Tokina 100mm macro lens for Canon EOS.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



In the class *Insecta*, you will find species of chewing herbivorous on the leaves of shrubs. BELOW The pictures of grasshoppers were taken near the river, the only reason I noticed them, is because I was exhausted from few hours of trekking back to the San Antonio village, so I stop to rest under the shade of tree, this is when I noticed a group of colorful grasshoppers on a long leaf of an almost dead bush.



*Chromacris icterus*, a member of Lubber Grasshoppers Family Romaleidae.

A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Genus *Coelomera*, a member of Skeletonizing Leaf and Flea Beetles Subfamily Galerucinae.  
*Ricolla quadrispinosa*.

The Amazonas can be seen from an altitude by hiking low peak hills to contemplate the lush rainforest. The canopy of trees is the upper layer of a forest formed by the crowns of mature trees; the dense foliage captures sunlight, which is essential for plant growth. The ecosystem provides habitat, regulates climate, and supports biodiversity.



Top view of Moyobamba from Morro de Calzada.



A high view near the riverbank of Tambopata river

AT the top of Morro de Calzada, there is a rock formation, La Silla del Brujo (the witches' chair). According to the tradition it has indigenous roots; it represents occult religious practices by Amazonian healers to realize rituals and connect with nature.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.

A large bee nest.



These group of hemipteran insects are best known for their plant-sucking nymphs which encase themselves in foam in springtime. The adults are capable of jumping many times their height and length, giving the group their common name.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



TOKINA 100mm 1.8 macro lens, f8 @1/200 sec ISO 200.



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The Tambopata National Reserve in the Madre de Dios region along the river, is rich of vegetation. To arrive at these reserved locations, takes several hours driving on dirt roads, navigating by boat and walking.



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*Saprophytic fungi*, which live on dead organic matter, are the most important decomposers of plant tissue in terrestrial environments, where they break down such complex organic molecules as cellulose and allow their constituent elements to be recycled. (Miller, 1994). The picture below, of *Cordyceps*, a refuge for parasites and the eggs from insects.



Parasite eggs. CANON EOS REBEL, TOKINA 100mm macro lens.

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Copoazu, a fruit I found on the ground walking along the basins of the Amazonas River. The creamy white pulp is rich in fiber and it tastes like cocoa.





Copoazu, white cocoa.



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## Butterflies and moths

Butterflies and moths from the order of Lepidoptera are abundant near rivers in the rainforest of South America. They are one of the most colorful winged insects' lepidopterans in the regions



The Amazonas, 2022.

## Ants & Spiders





TOKINA 100mm macro lens. Tambopata rainforest, 2023.



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## Earthworms

Earthworms from the phylum Annelida.



Photo-macrography. Tambopata Reserve Perú. August, 2022.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.

## Metamorphic Rocks

The first mountain I climbed was Marcahuasi. Since my first visit in my high school days, this is one of the few places I want to return when I'm in Perú.

The volcanic Marcahuasi is located in the Andes Mountain range in Perú at an altitude of 4,000 meters not far from the Pacific coast. The hike from the small village of San Pedro de Casta to the summit is relatively short, three to four hours. Overnight stay in the village is recommended to acclimate to the altitude.

When you arrived to the plateau, a display of gigantic rocks exposed to thousands of years of the Andes' climate captivate any visitor.

The rocks and pre-inca chullpas (archeological remains) are spread through the rough terrain of three kilometers square.



360 panoramic on the isolated plateau with Patrick E. Lara.



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A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



A puddle of water accumulated by rain.



A View from the Wild Side. Walter E. Lara February 2025.



Sigma 8mm f/3.5 EX DG Circular Fisheye Lens. Photo by Carlos Hernández.



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## Travelling Recommendations

Select the right season and weather conditions to climb a mountain, walk in the forest, or dive in the ocean. The day of the week and time of the day in particular are critical.

You want solitude, arrive when others leave.

Research the area prior to the trip and make the right contacts. Knowing the language and culture helps to find the right places and work with the right people.

Near estuaries, rivers, oceans or in the jungle, carry your cameras inside a waterproof backpack and bring additional batteries and enjoy the photoshoot.