

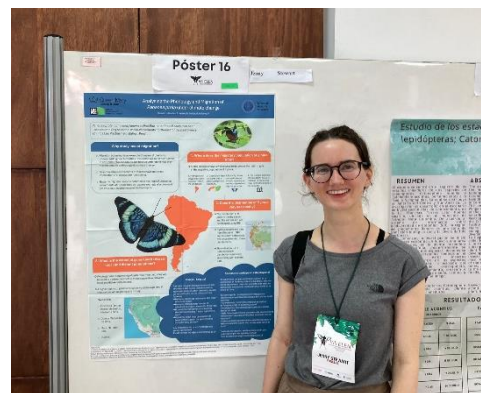
Expedition Fund Report

I set off for South America feeling excited and slightly apprehensive, and like I'd probably forgotten something important. The purpose of my expedition was to collect butterflies for my PhD project, in which I'm investigating the possible migration of an Amazonian butterfly, *Panacea prola*. We believe these butterflies may be migrating to avoid unfavourable climatic conditions during the dry season, in Southeastern Peru. By understanding how butterflies cope with seasonal fluctuations in climate, we may be better equipped to predict how they'll respond to climate change. As well as being beautiful and emblematic of the Amazon, tropical butterflies play an important role as pollinators, herbivores and food for other species in the wider rainforest ecosystem.



In July I travelled to two different field sites in the Peruvian Amazon - Quince Mil, in the foothills of the Andes, and Manu Learning Centre, in Manu National Park. I spent my time catching *Panacea prola* butterflies with banana bait traps and hand-held nets. It wasn't easy, but I was in good hands with my research assistant, Zunilda, who made sure that we caught every butterfly we needed (and made it look easy!) We bonded over being more excited about caterpillars than you'd expect your average person to be.

After we'd finished our work at the research station in Manu, I flew to a conference on Neotropical butterflies in Ecuador, where I met up with one of my lab mates from Queen Mary. The Queen Mary Expedition Fund contributed towards the cost of my expedition, and meant that choosing to attend the conference in Ecuador as well as completing my fieldwork in Peru was an easy decision. At the conference, I presented a poster with my plans for my PhD, and was able to chat with academics about their research. I made some new contacts, including a couple who were interested in helping out with one chapter of my PhD, which was a great outcome.



For the remainder of my trip, I collected butterflies at Finca Las Piedras, a research station in Southeastern Peru. My biggest take away from the trip was that there's almost

always someone that can help you out. In the times when I was on my own, I was quite often helped by complete strangers – a taxi driver that carried my heavy rucksack a quarter of a mile to my hotel when a road was closed; a man at the post office who communicated with me through Google translate; someone that gave me free orange juice when our flight was delayed. I know this is a good lesson for the rest of my PhD,



where I will have to reach out to lots of different people to ask for help with things I've never done before. I'm grateful to my supervisors for putting their faith in me carrying out such an ambitious trip so early in my PhD, and to the London NERC DTP for funding my project. I'm excited to go back to Peru next year, hopefully with a lot more Spanish, and be able to connect with more people.