



## Brazil Amazon & Pantanal Trip Report 2023

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**Guides: Héctor Gómez de Silva and Ricardo Parrini** The Pantanal is world-famous for its wildlife and includes the best place in the world to see jaguars. The nearby Chapada dos Guimaraes and Jardim da Amazonia feature additional birds in completely different ecosystems. On this tour we saw a number of special species, including Red-legged Seriema, Red-billed Scythebill, Cone-billed Tanager and the attractive Hyacinth and Golden-collared Macaws, not to mention four jaguars in broad daylight, giant otters, 4 Brazilian Tapirs and a mother and baby Giant Anteater! In all, we recorded 352 species of birds (14 heard only) and 20 species of mammals in the 14 days. **Day 1. September 16. Arrival day** We met in Cuiabá with our local guide Ricardo Parrini. **Day 2. September 17** After a buffet breakfast, we left the hotel on a Sprinter bus (followed by a second bus with our large luggage) and headed south to our next hotel in the northern part of the Transpantaneira road, stopping on the way to bird from the roadside (and a washroom stop). The first part of the drive was on pavement but after that (and for the next few days) it was a wide gravel road. We saw the first **Greater Rheas** of the trip and many, many other birds and, 20 km before arriving at the hotel, little after noon, a **Brazilian Tapir** crossed the road in front of us! This was completely unexpected and, unfortunately, only half of the group got to see this very special mammal –but I told the group “the good news is that the hotel we’re going to sometimes has a Brazilian Tapir visiting the garden at night. We had a buffet lunch and after checking in and having a break in our rooms, we took a delightful boatripe along the Pixaim River next to the hotel, where highlights included a **Toco Toucan**, **White-throated Piping-Guans**, a **Sungrebe** and a **Sunbittern**, a glimpse of an **Agami Heron** and dozens of **Band-tailed Nighthawks** flying (seemingly floating) low over our boat as it returned to the hotel at dusk.



*Turquoise-fronted Parrots* © Héctor Gómez de Silva

At night, after dinner, a pair of Brazilian Tapirs with a baby showed up right next to the wing of the hotel where some of us had our rooms! (they were eating the green mangoes that had fallen from the trees; we all got to see them since the hotel staff alerted us to them while we were still together in the dining room). Incredible! Four tapirs in one day! (our first full day, in fact). **Day 3.**

**September 18** Before breakfast we took another wonderful boatripe along the Pixaim River, with many birds including the rare **Green-and-rufous Kingfisher**, and most participants managed to get outstanding views of an **Agami Heron**. After breakfast and again after lunch we took the forest trail behind the hotel and added more goodies to our lists, including **Hyacinth Macaws** and **Pale-crested Woodpecker, Pale-legged Hornero** and the near-endemic **Mato Grosso Antbird**. **Day 4.**

**September 19** Before breakfast some of the group met to walk around the hotel and nearby abandoned airstrip (meeting up at 5:20 am to look for **Nacunda Nighthawk** which showed up exactly on cue). We had nice views of species we had already seen including a pair of **Greater Rheas** with babies. After breakfast we had a long drive to the south end of the Transpantaneira road, at Porto Jofre -with many species seen from the bus including **Maguari Stork**, dozens of **Jabirus** and a dozen **Southern Screamers**. **Day 5. September 20** The Day of the Jaguar. Porto Jofre Hotel specializes in catering for two types of tourists: fishermen and people seeking encounters with jaguars. **Pantanal jaguars** are the largest subspecies of jaguar (*Panthera onca palustris*). Their main prey here are the capybaras and caimans that populate the edges of the river, and morning and afternoon boatrides in the river produce a high probability of encountering a jaguar. While the main target on both boatrides was viewing jaguars, and we saw two separate individuals in the morning and another two (or three) in the afternoon, we also saw a good number of other species of birds, mammals and reptiles including **White Woodpeckers**, a **Green-barred Woodpecker**, **Giant Otters**, **Black-and-gold Howler Monkeys** (the males are black and the females and young have gold-buff fur), a yellow anaconda and many caimans. Midday at the hotel, we watched the local Hyacinth Macaws at close quarters.



*Jaguar © Héctor Gómez de Silva*



*Jaguar © Héctor Gómez de Silva*



*Jaguar © Héctor Gómez de Silva*



*Watching giant otters © Héctor Gómez de Silva*



*Boating back to lodge at Porto Jofre © Héctor Gómez de Silva*



*Hyacinth Macaw © Héctor Gómez de Silva*

**Day 6. September 21** After breakfast we drove north again along the Transpantaneira to our next hotel, Piuval Lodge, where we stayed only one night. We made 3 main birding stops and added goodies such as **Fawn-breasted Wren**, **Dull-capped Attila**, an adult and a fledgeling **Lesser Horned Owl**, a **Yellowish Pipit**, a **White-banded Mockingbird**, and the elegant **Chotoy Spinetail**.



*Lesser Horned-Owl Adult* © Héctor Gómez de Silva



*Lesser Horned-Owl fledgling* © Héctor Gómez de Silva



*Chotoy Spinetail © Héctor Gómez de Silva*



*Roadside birding in Brazil © Héctor Gómez de Silva*

After a late lunch and a siesta we took a late afternoon-and-early evening game drive in the vicinity of the lodge, seeing a pair of **Great Rufous Woodcreepers**, a day-roosting **Great Potoo**, a night-roosting **Red-legged Seriema**, a **Black-banded Owl**, a **Little Nightjar**, several **Common Pauraques** and several **Tapeti** (Brazilian Rabbit). **Day 7. September 22** We started the day with a 1 ½ hr game drive near the lodge before breakfast, in which we saw a female **Giant Anteater**

carrying a baby on her back, and thanks to radio communication with the lodge staff, a **Southern Tamandua** -two anteaters in one morning!



*Southern Tamandua* © Héctor Gómez de Silva

After breakfast we took another, 3-hour game drive in the vicinity of the lodge and saw two more **Red-legged Seriemas**, several **Rufous Casiornis**, a **Red-billed Scythebill**, and many other birds.



*Red-billed Scythebill* © Héctor Gómez de Silva

After lunch at Piuval Lodge, we left the Pantanal ecosystem to drive to the upland, cerrado

ecosystem at Chapada dos Guimaraes, where we'd be three days because there are many birding sites scattered around the area. Before reaching the hotel Pousada do Parque, which is set inside the Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park, we saw a few birds including our first **Brown Jacamar** (much prettier than their picture in the field guide) and our first **Red-and-green Macaw**. **Day 8. September 23** After an early breakfast we drove to the Agua Fria road, where we birded in the low scrub for a couple of hours before it became too warm and the bird activity dropped dramatically. We added a great many species to our birdlist at this site, including **White-banded (aka Shrike-like), White-rumped, Black-faced and Cinnamon Tanagers, Plain-crested Elaenias, a Spot-backed Puffbird, a Suiriri Flycatcher** and a **Red-crested Finch**. Then we visited the forested Vale da Bencao for a couple of hours, and we saw additional species including a **Crested Becard** and a **Crested Oropendola** nesting side by side in the same tree canopy. After lunch at a restaurant in town, we drove back to the lodge and had a siesta, but not before I showed the group a couple of trees and nearby flowering bushes, right beside the main lodge building, which were buzzing with hummingbirds of different species, and they included a fabulous **Scissor-tailed Hummingbird** and a pair of **Frilled Coquettes**. In the afternoon we visited the Caverna Aroe Jari road, where we saw our first Burrowing Owls and Black-throated Saltators of the trip, and other highlights were a nesting **Red-legged Seriema** and the trip's only **Least Nighthawk** just before dusk.



*Red-legged Seriema on nest © Héctor Gómez de Silva*

**Day 9. September 24** Busy day today. After another early breakfast we again visited the low scrub, this time on the Geladeira road. Here we saw among others a **Rufous-winged Antshrike**, a pair of **Planalto Slaty-Antshrikes**, a **Chapada Flycatcher** and a **White-throated Kingbird**. Again, once it became too hot and sunny we retreated to a forested area, this time Vale do Jamacá -where a pair of **Sibilant Sirystes** was the highlight. Next was the spectacular view of the canyon and waterfall at Veu de Noiva, made even more spectacular by the pair of **Red-and-green Macaws** that flew close to the lookout a few minutes after we arrived. And the **Cliff Flycatcher** that showed up on a cliff near us. For lunch we went to a fancy restaurant with its own cliff lookout, and after lunch we visited the lookout a saw an amazing **King Vulture**, a pair of **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls** as well as a pair of **Lettered Aracaris** and the trip's only **Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers** (elegant). After a siesta (and optional hummingbirding) back at our hotel, we walked the lodge's own forest trail, seeing an

**Amazonian Motmot** and a pair of **Channel-billed Toucans**, 3 **Planalto Tyrannulet** and a pair of lovely **Saffron-billed Sparrows**, and watching the sunset from the tower at the end of the trail.



*Our buses at Pousada do Parque Lodge © Héctor Gómez de Silva*

**Day 10. September 25** After yet another early breakfast, today we again visited the lodge's forested trail and saw another suite of special birds, not the least of which was a **Tataupa Tinamou** (tinamou not "heard-only" any more!), a rather rarely seen **Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin** and a little group of **Golden-crowned Warbler** (white-bellied form). After checking out of the hotel, we made the long drive to yet another ecosystem: the Amazon at Jardim da Amazonia Lodge, where we checked in, had a late lunch, and then birded at forest edge and a lake a short drive way, with the highlight being multiple views of **Blue-and-yellow Macaws** (including one on the ground eating a corn cob). **Day 11. September 26** After an early breakfast we boarded two motorboats and were taken upriver first to the lodge's own oxbow lake --the world's ONLY reliable spot to see **Cone-billed Tanager**, which we saw quickly, then continued watching birds along the river and on a short trail that can be reached by boat only. Among other goodies we saw a pure **Red-throated Piping-Guan** (until now we had seen only White-throated and a few hybrids), the beautiful **Yellow-throated and Ringed Woodpeckers**, **Silvered, Black-throated and Rondonia Warbling-Antbirds**, **White-banded Swallow**, **Epaulet Oriole**, **Short-billed Honeycreeper** and **Blue-necked and Turquoise Tanagers**, and a group of roosting Proboscis Bats.



*Boating on the river at Amazonia © Héctor Gómez de Silva*



*Boating on the river at Amazonia © Héctor Gómez de Silva*

After lunch and a siesta we walked a dirtroad to some ponds and saw a female **Dot-eared Coquette**, a **Bat Falcon** eating a **Gray-breasted Martin** it had just caught, **Black-girdled Barbet**, **Red-necked Aracari** and **Bare-necked Fuitcrow**. **Day 12. September 27** The morning was spent walking a loop trail from the lodge. Here we saw the world's smallest passerine, **Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant** (in flight it looks and moves like a bumblebee), glimpsed a **Chattering Gnatwren**,

and saw a **White-barred Piculet** and other birds.



*Birding at the Amazonia Lodge © Héctor Gómez de Silva*

In the afternoon, we visited a forest trail a short boatride from the lodge and saw Black-faced Spider Monkeys, a Green-backed Trogon, and had a couple of brief views of Red-headed Manakin. **Day 13. September 28** After an early breakfast, we birded upriver from the lodge and took the same trail as yesterday afternoon, seeing cute Band-tailed Antbirds and a glimpsed Amazonian Barred-Woodcreeper along the river, and a pair of tiny Dwarf Tyrant-Manakins, a Collared Trogon and a Flame-crowned Manakin on the trail.



*Our group*



After lunch we were driven back to Cuiabá where we checked into our hotel and had our last supper together at a nearby restaurant. And so our Pantanal & Amazon (and Chapada) tour/adventure came to an end, with a plethora of fabulous birds and other wildlife in our memories and our photographs.