Eagle-Eye Tours



Galapagosian! Up close and personal encounters with wildlife in Brazil

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By Paul Prior

Galapagosian! That's the word that was coined on Eagle Eye's recent trip to Brazil where repeated encounters with birds, mammals and reptiles were astonishingly up close and personal!

Fair enough, at no point was it necessary to actually step over an unconcerned nesting Blue-footed Booby, but these were the kinds of views of wildlife that one might expect on safari in Africa's big game parks, not here on mainland South America. For example, at Pixaim I went out for an evening stroll around the wetland adjacent to the lodge and was shocked when this South American Tapir nonchalantly continued browsing as I stepped in for close-up photos.



South American Tapir © Paul Prior

The following night I did the same again; this time I met this Grey Brocket deer which wandered along the wetland berm, showing absolutely no fear of me – even when I attempted to engage it in conversation (I wanted to make sure the animal actually knew I was there – it did, but it just didn't care!).



Grey Brocket © Paul Prior

Of course, the biggest thrill, and the main reason for joining the trip, was to see Jaguar. Admittedly we were in a boat and river trips are generally pretty good for approaching large mammals – but this

was a Jaguar!!



Female Jaguar © Paul Prior

Far from slinking off back into the “jungle” one of the four animals that we saw actually waded out into the river in front of us and swam across just metres from our idling vessel.





Jaguar going for a swim © Paul Prior

I am convinced that the Jaguars, Jabirus, deer, Capybaras, tapir, curassows, macaws, even the caiman, were unafraid of their admiring audience in large part because since 1967 hunting has been illegal in Brazil! None of these creatures have had any negative experiences associated with us awkward looking bipeds. I love traveling to Guyana – absolutely first class birding – but most wildlife encounters there are hushed and carefully conducted, ensuring not to spook the animal. But here in western Brazil, the animals were seemingly entirely relaxed around us. Just look at this Jaguar doing a fine impression of your spoiled housecat, stretching after a lazy nap – not a care.



Jaguar stretching © Paul Prior

Post Script: upon my return to Toronto, I did a little online searching for the history of the no-hunting legislation in Brazil and it turns out that just a couple of months ago an appeal was launched for the Bolsonaro government to overturn the ban. Now, I'm not anti-hunting (at least when it comes to putting food on the table), but I think it is highly likely that, if the ban is lifted, eco-tourists are not going to have quite the same experience here as they have done for the past few years. And so, the message here is, frankly, if you're looking for incredible wildlife encounters in South America, probably better to head to the Pantanal in the near future!