



Iguazu Falls Extension Trip Report 2024

[Link: Iguazu Falls Extension Trip Report 2024](#)

A full complement of participants this year meant the two Eagle-Eye leaders (Adam and I) and our trusty local guide, Marcos, had our hands full. But what a great bunch of people. They gelled pretty much from the first moment and over the next few days they shared many excellent views of hard-to-spot forest birds, the spectacle of hundreds of dazzling butterflies, and of course, the falls themselves - all in sweltering but rather dry heat, pretty much the exact opposite of 2023's weather!



Iguazu Falls © Paul Prior

Marcos met us off the plane on the first day and whisked us straight to the Iguazu Falls National Park where we hopped on to the tiny-gauge park-train and steamed through clouds of sulphur butterflies over to the Garganta Del Diablo (The Devil's Throat, no less) where gazillions of Great Dusky Swifts careened through the spray, occasionally seeming to dive straight into the thundering cataracts. Hordes of black vultures and the occasional Snail Kite and Yellow-headed Caracara hung around, presumably likewise admiring the falls. Meanwhile, back at the Park entrance, away from the mist and thunder, Plush-crested Jays put on a fine show of nuptial preening. Here we also encountered pairs of Chestnut-bellied Euphonia, Saffron Finches, and a mob of Red-rumped Caciques. Back at our hotel - La Selva de Laurel - we enjoyed the first of several fine suppers and the group continued to bond, Canadian and American alike.



Plush-crested Jays © Paul Prior



Saffron Finch © Larry Lee

Our second day found us back at the Park entrance at dawn where we were treated to great looks at Toco Toucan, Swallow Tanager, a pair of Slaty-breasted Wood-Rails, Burrowing Owl, Campo Flicker, Thrush-like Wren, and Saffron-billed Sparrow. We made our way over to the tiny-train station to check-out some of the forest-edge species - Small-billed, Large and Yellow-bellied Elaenias, and Red-crested Finch. Then, as the crowds began to arrive, we hiked to the start of the Macuco Trail. Adam and I had expected some difficulty getting a group of 12 people onto the various species along the narrow trail, but Marcos did a fine job.



Toco Toucans © Larry Lee



Swallow Tangers (female and male) © Larry Lee

The highlight was certainly the astonishingly good looks at Spot-billed Toucanet, but we were also treated to prolonged looks at Rufous-capped Motmot, great views of Golden-crowned Warblers, and close encounters with a troupe of Black-horned Capuchins. Deeper forest species such as Southern Antpipit and Euler's Flycatcher proved somewhat trickier for the whole group to see, but all in all it was a very successful morning hike capped by an excellent buffet lunch.



Spot-billed Toucanet © Larry Lee

The afternoon was devoted to another hike to the Falls this time to the upper circuit for more swift action, some Greater Ani and a Rufescent Tiger-Heron.



Great Dusky Swifts on cliff wall © Larry Lee

The third day saw a repeat of the early morning wake-up, but still no complaints! Perhaps because these pre-drawn departures were really paying-off. This time we rose early to make the hour-long drive to the Urugua-i Provincial Park where we stood watch from the bridge on the main for two target birds. After a while of watching Southern Yellowthroats, Ruby-crowned Tanager, and various thrushes, the first target showed well on the disintegrating brick dam below the bridge: Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper. Soon after this, the second and main target appeared, flying across the road and settling conveniently on an exposed branch: the regionally endemic Black-fronted Piping-Guan.



Black-fronted Piping-Guan © Paul Prior

Marcos now led us back to the van where he presented each of us with correctly sized Wellington boots! And off we trudged into the Urugua-i Reserve proper. The dry weather seemed to have turned much of the bird song off along the trail, and we struggled for a while to find any of the target antbirds. However, there was still plenty of action from other local goodies such as White-browed Warbler, Greenish Tyrannulet, Black-goggled Tanagers, Cream-bellied Gnatcatcher, Purple-throated Euphonia, Streaked Xenops, Ochre-breasted Foliage-gleaner, Ochre-collared Piculet and a very obliging Rusty-breasted Nunlet. One lucky member of the group happened upon a Red-ruffed Fruitcrow which sadly made a quick exit before anyone other than Marcos could get onto the bird! But just the one Bertoni's Antbird for the entire hike.



Our intention in the afternoon had been to spend a couple of hours at the local hummingbird garden, but sadly the very dry conditions appeared to have impacted these guys as well. The owner regrettably informed us he was closed due to lack of hummers! And so made do with a short hike through some of the habitat near our hotel which proved surprisingly productive with excellent looks at Dark-billed Cuckoo, Variable Oriole, Masked Tityra, Variegated Flycatcher and a Plumbeous Kite. A slightly later start for our last morning. We headed to Ruta 101 then down to the Rangers station where we spent the first hour post-dawn, tracking down some of the birds that were busy singing as the sun rose. Our second Sibilant Sirystes sat out in the open, high on an exposed snag, providing great looks, while nearby Plain Antvireos and Yellow Tyrannulets foraged in the understory. The cheerfully carolling White-necked Thrush was not quite as cooperative, and a pair of Streak-capped Antwrens stayed frustratingly high in the canopy. Then Marcos spotted a Wing-barred Piprites, singing but hiding in nearby vines but with some coaxing the bird moved into better and better views, finally providing excellent prolonged looks. We now took the sidetrack towards the river and encountered more birds than at any other time on the tour. Rufous Gnatcatcher proved very difficult, but a busy flock of foraging Rusty-margined Antwrens were much more cooperative. While we waited for our only Red-breasted Toucan to reveal itself a couple of Scaly-headed Parrots arrived and stole the show. At one point, as we tried to pish in a couple of Eared Pygmy-tyrants, a small raptor joined us and watched from a trailside perch: Rufous-thighed Kite. Further along a White-shouldered Fire-eye gave variously good and bad looks to several people in the group while a pair of Yellow-fronted Woodpeckers came and went overhead. We ambitiously tried to pull in a relatively nearby Variegated Antpitta which - though it approached to within 30 meters - chose to remain obscured by the trail-side vegetation.



Scaly-headed Parrot © Larry Lee

As the sun climbed higher and the bird activity began to falter we were treated to clouds of butterflies puddling along the river-side track. Some of these gorgeous creatures certainly gave the birds some dazzling competition!



A selection of some of the amazing butterflies © Paul Prior

Having reached the look-out with the view back north towards the falls we about-turned and made our way back to the bus which taxied us down to the Daniel "Pupi" Somay Observatorio de Aves, looking over a small marsh. Unfortunately, with the late morning heat, most of the birds had retreated into the cooler shadows, but we did manage to spot a handsome male Chestnut-bellied Seed-Finch, and meanwhile a pair of Blackish Rails grunted nearby.



Our group at Iguazu Falls

And that would be about it. Having enjoyed another excellent lunch at our hotel we made our way

back to the Aeropuerto and our mid-pm check-in for the return to bustling Buenos Aires. Many of the group were continuing with Adam and I to points much further south or joining the parallel CanGeo tour. Sadly, two of our new friends were heading back north to the States, but they had provided us with many memorable moments ... and some photos, included in this Iguazu review. Thanks, everyone, for another wonderful visit to the fabulous Cataratas del Iguazu! [Iguazu Falls species list 2024 \(pdf\)](#)