

Sunrise Birding LLC
PANTANAL

August 2 – 10, 2014

**Trip Report
& Species List**



Photos (top to bottom): Hyacinth Macaw, Toco Toucan, Black-collared Hawk, Greater Rhea, Happy group!



Sunrise Birding LLC

www.sunrisebirding.com

Brazil: PANTANAL TRIP REPORT

AUGUST 2 – 10, 2014

Leaders: Frank Mantlik & local guides

Report & Photos by Frank Mantlik

HIGHLIGHTS (Rarities, specialties, or simply a group favorite):

- Hyacinth Macaws
- Greater Rhea
- Red and Green Macaws
- Sungrebe
- King Vulture
- Sunbitterns
- Azure Gallinule
- Red-legged Seriema
- Pheasant Cuckoo
- Jabiru
- Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls
- Jaguars!
- Giant Otter
- Black-tailed Marmoset
- Capybara families
- Three amazing boat trips
- Fabulous butterflies
- Chestnut-bellied Guan
- Swallow Tanager
- Scarlet-headed Blackbird
- Southern Screamer
- Collared Crescentchest

Day 1, Cuiaba to Pousada Piuval

Since all participants had arrived at the hotel yesterday, after breakfast we packed up the bus and departed with Miguel, our local guide, to the Pantanal. This very vast flatland of 80,000 square miles contains the largest freshwater wetland in the world. Shortly we were outside the city and made our first birding stop at a pond, where we saw our first **Wood Storks**, **Whistling Herons**, **Capped Heron**, **Southern Lapwings**, **Wattled Jacana**, and **Pantanal Caiman**.

Next we stopped at a cattle ranch with a large pool. Here we saw **Ringed Kingfisher**, two **Buff-necked Ibis**, **Cattle Tyrants**, a flock of **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks**, and our first **Capybara**. A comfort stop in Pocone yielded a flyover **Wood Stork** and **Blue-and-white Swallows**. Just beyond the town, the road became dirt-the start of the 140 km-long Transpantaneira Highway through the Pantanal. We stopped at a ranch, where Miguel spotted two different **Red-legged Seriemas** standing in the shade of scattered trees. Also we saw **Greater Rhea**, **Roadside Hawk**, **Southern Caracara**, and many large termite mounds. Further along, we enjoyed a flock of 10 **Guira Cuckoos**, **Striated Heron**, **Rufescent Tiger-Heron**, **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture**, **Campo Flickers**, and a **White Monjita** on a guide wire.

We arrived at our lodge, Pousada Piuval at noon, where we instantly saw **Monk Parakeets**, **Black-collared Hawk**, **Snail Kites**, **Limpkins**, **Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures**, **Rufous Horneros**, and a pair of **Southern Screamers**. After a wonderful buffet lunch, we birded the shady grounds of



the lodge and enjoyed the views of the grasslands and wetlands of the Pantanal. Among the sightings were **Vermilion Flycatcher**, **Bay-winged Cowbirds**, **Rufous-bellied Thrush**, **Saffron Finches**, **Fork-tailed Woodnymph**, **Muscovy Duck**, and a “**Black-collared**” **Lizard**. Frank scoped the area and found us **Large-billed Terns**, **Black Skimmers**, **Black-necked (White-backed) Stilts**, and a **Bare-faced Ibis**.

Mid-afternoon we took the bus down a ranch road. We soon were walking up close to our first huge **Jabiru**, which was feeding along the road and afforded great photos. Barbara G. spotted a fabulous **Hyacinth Macaw** on the ground ahead, which later landed in a tree directly over our heads! Our walk also produced 7 **Nacunda Nighthawks** roosting on the ground and flying, **Turquoise-fronted Parrot**, a **Plumbeous Ibis** at nest with young, **Epaulet Oriole**, and great scope views of a **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl**. Farther along with



the sun getting low, we saw 6 **Brown Capuchin Monkeys**, **Lineated** and **Pale-headed Woodpeckers**, **Orange-winged Parrots**, **Blue-throated** and **Red-throated Piping-Guans**, the endemic **Chestnut-bellied Guan**, and a **Black-and-Gold Howler Monkey**. We heard several close **Undulated Tinamous**. Returning to the lodge at dusk, a **Savanna Hawk** stooped on prey in front of the bus.

Day 2, Pousada Piuval to km140

We met pre-dawn for an early morning boat ride on the river near the lodge. En route our 4WD truck got briefly mired in soft mud. While we donned life-jackets at the dock, Miguel spotted a pair of **Great Horned Owls** with chick at a nest. The boat ride at dawn was fabulous, taking us among incredible feeding flocks of thousands of water birds: **Great** and **Snowy Egrets**, **Jabirus**, **Wood Storks**, **Cocoi** and **Striated Herons**, **Roseate Spoonbills**, and **Neotropical Cormorants**. Overhead were numerous **Large-billed Terns**, and in the few shrubs were **Black-capped Donacobius** and **White-headed Marsh-Tyrant**.

Returning to the dock with full camera cards, we enjoyed close looks at **Rufescent Tiger-Heron** and **Black-collared Hawk**, then briefly explored the gallery forest. Miguel heard high-pitched calls and located for us two **Black-tailed Marmosets**. Frank found a perched **Aplomado Falcon**, and we had brief views of a **Red-billed Scythebill**.

After breakfast, we had views and photo-ops of close **Greater Rheas**, **Plumbeous** and **Buff-necked Ibises**, **Picazuro Pigeons**, and **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture**. We boarded the bus mid-morning to continue our journey down the Highway. We stopped during the heat of mid-day when Miguel heard a **Great Thornbird** and we saw a pair near their unique nest. A **White-tailed Hawk** soared overhead. Later we saw **Marsh**



Deer both a doe and a buck from the bus. We stopped for a delicious lunch at Mato Grosso Hotel along the Pixaim River, followed by some new trip birds on the grounds: **Solitary Black Caciue**, **Grayish Saltator**, **Picui Ground-Dove**, and **Purplish Jay**. Stopping at one of the 120 wooden bridges along the Transpantaneira Highway and saw two **Boat-billed Herons**, **Black-crowned Night-Herons**, **Anhingás**, **Mato Grosso Antbird**, and **White-winged Swallows**. Nearing the road's end in late afternoon, the highway was "littered" with 150 **Southern Caracaras**; it seemed many were juveniles. We arrived at our lodge, Pantanal Norte Hotel in Porto Jofre at sunset and were "greeted" by a half dozen **Hyacinth Macaws**!

Day 3, Rio Cuiaba and Jaguars

Following an early breakfast, we boarded a long motor boat piloted by Mateo for the morning on the Rio Cuiaba. Main target: Jaguar. They come to the river banks to drink, feed, and rest. We saw **Yellow-chevroned Parakeets**, **Pale-vented Pigeons**, **Plain Tyrannulet**, and **Brown-crested Flycatcher**. We had great views of a pair of **Great Black-Hawks** perched and in flight. A comfort stop on the riverbank netted us a mixed flock that included **Rusty-backed Spinetail**, **Masked Gnatcatcher**, **Short-crested Flycatcher**, **Southern Beardless Tyrannulet**, **Silver-beaked Tanager**, and **Common Tody-Flycatchers**. Mateo received a radio report of a Jaguar, and the race was on. Numerous **Pantanal Caimans** were passed as we sped to the site, and a Dorado fish leapt right into the boat! By the time we arrived, the big cat was no longer visible, though we joined the throng of 13 anchored boats.

Soon we continued on, and Mateo put the boat into position for us to see our first **Giant Otter** along the bank. Then we saw some soaring **Wood Storks**, a dark **Short-tailed Hawk**, and a fly-by **Yellow-rumped Caciue**. Miguel spotted a **Greater Ani** flying across the river. We stopped to photograph a cute family of 4 **Capybaras** on the riverbank. Soon we encountered four other boats and we joined them in watching a magnificent male **Jaguar**! It rested then slowly walked along the bank. How exciting! Cameras clicked. We were thrilled to say the least!

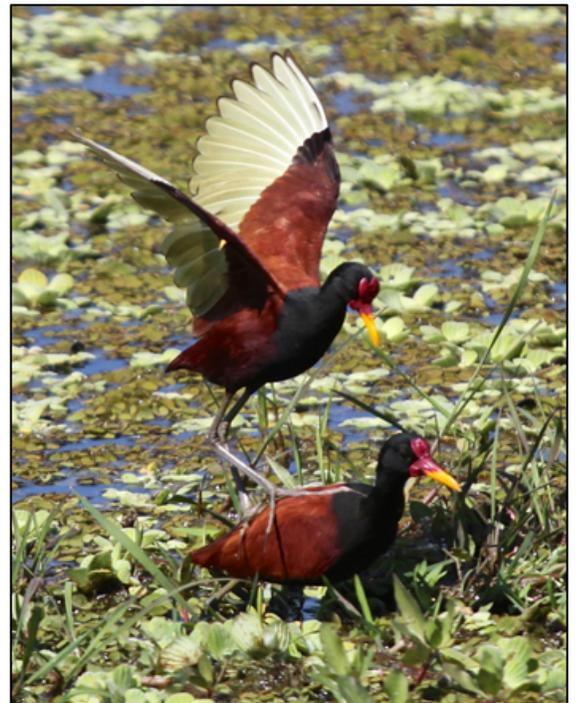


On our way back to the lodge, we stopped for photos of a **Southern Screamer** perched in a treetop, an odd sight for such a large bird. Lunch at the lodge was followed by some down time during the heat of the day. Some folks photographed **Toco Toucans**, **Southern Caracaras**, **Sayaca Tanagers**, and **Capybaras**, among others. We convened at the boat at 2:30 pm for an afternoon run on the river. We failed to see another Jaguar at a boat “party”, but had great views of fly-by **Southern Lapwings** and **Anhingas**. Cruising along at dusk, we enjoyed numerous **Band-tailed Nightjars** overhead, as well as large **Fish-eating Bats (Lesser Bulldog Bats)**. Miguel noticed eye-shine in his spotlight beam, and we enjoyed terrific views of another impressive **Jaguar** along the dark riverbank. It was a stellar day and dinner included celebratory drinks of the local Caipirinha.



Day 4, Pantanal Norte to Rio Claro

We took a pre-dawn stroll on a nearby forest track and racked up some new species: **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, **Great Antshrike**, **Dull-capped Attila**, and **Fawn-breasted Wren**. Calling **Undulated Tinamous** avoided being seen. Barbara M. saw a mammal cross the path that was probably a **Tayra**. We walked a boardwalk across a pond that had huge **Giant Water Lilies** and other aquatic flowers. After breakfast we packed up, and birded the grounds one last time. Barbara G. photographed a **Gray-crowned Pigeon** nesting at her room and Bill found a pair of **Pied Lapwings** near the pond. We checked out and boarded the bus for the ride back north up the Highway. A mid-day stop at some trees by an old shack was productive. We saw **Rusty-margined Flycatchers**, **White-lored** and **Chotoy Spinetails**, **Rufous (Gray-crested) Cacholote**, **Chestnut-bellied (Lesser) Seed-Finch**, and **Double-collared Seedeater**. We stopped for a picnic lunch at a small pousada. Here we viewed four **Chestnut-eared Aracaris**, and some saw a pair of **Wattled Jacanas** copulating. Nearby we stopped the bus to view a brilliant male **Scarlet-headed Blackbird** atop some reeds. Revisiting the Mato Grosso Hotel, we enjoyed ice cream while seeing **Buff-bellied Hermit**, **Narrow-billed Woodcreeper**, **Orange-backed Troupial**, and an entertaining **Brown Capuchin Monkey**. Further on, we photographed a **Jabiru** on a nest and saw a **Gray Brocket Deer**.



Turning into the long driveway of our next lodge, Miguel spotted an **Azure Gallinule** out in the open and two **Gray-necked Wood-Rails** that were foraging in a ditch. We birded the productive road on foot till dark, netting **Eared Doves**, **Pale-legged Hornero**, **Sunbittern**, **Scaly-headed Parrots**, **Yellow-chinned Spinetail**, and nice views of two **Great Rufous Woodcreepers**. The day ended with the bird list and dinner at Pousada Rio Claro. After dinner we were informed of a **Great Potoo** perched in a tree.

Day 5, Rio Claro (Pantanal) to Cuiaba to Serra das Araras

We met pre-dawn for a boat ride on the Rio Claro. The fog was dense creating an eerie, beautiful atmosphere. Five **Band-tailed Nighthawks** hunted low over the river. We motored upstream,

seeing cormorants, kingfishers, herons, and egrets. Frank spotted a female **Sungrebe** ahead, which flew to the riverbank. Our spotlights provided excellent views of this elusive species. We came upon a massive spider web that totally covered the riverside vegetation, and glistened with the morning mist. No one wished to see the arachnid that created it! Barbara M. spotted a **Sunbittern** and we soon all had good looks at it. Upon our return, a feeding trough attracted many **Chestnut-bellied Guans**. After breakfast, we birded the lodge grounds and feeders, finding **Chaco Chachalacas, Nanday (Black-hooded) Parakeets, Silver-beaked and Palm Tanagers, Grayish Saltator, Saffron Fiches, Chestnut-eared Aracari, White-tipped Dove, and Bare-faced Curassows**. At mid-morning we drove north on the Transpantaneira Highway, making a few stops along the way to view mostly familiar species. We made a rest stop at a nice new visitor center in Pocone where many bought souvenirs. A memorable lunch was had at a classic Brazilian churrascaria, where grilled meats of all types are served from long skewers. We drove toward Serra das Araras, northwest of Cuiaba, and encountered a massive traffic jam (truck accident) on the highway. As a result, we arrived at our lodge after dark, but we were still greeted with hospitality and a delicious dinner.

Day 6, Serra das Araras - Harpy Hunt

After an early breakfast, we saw **Picazuro Pigeons, Chopi Blackbirds, and Blue-headed Parrots** and then boarded the bus at sunrise to bird the fields, forest, and ponds of the lodge's ranch. The morning light was beautiful on two **Green Ibis**, a **Southern Lapwing**, and flocks of **White-faced Whistling-Ducks** and **Brazilian Teal**. Frank got a **Magpie Tanager** in the scope. While looking at some **Short-tailed Swifts**, our attention turned to four screaming, brilliant **Red-and-Green Macaws** flying past. We made hasty to drive



through cattle graze-land to get to the Harpy Eagle nest site that Miguel had discovered a number of years ago. Along the way we saw a mixed flock of **Dusky-headed and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets**, a **Great Black-Hawk**, a trio of **Least Grebes**, and **Chalk-browed Mockingbird**. We had great scope views of a perched **Crane Hawk**, which we then enjoyed in flight. And we also had good views of **White-eared Puffbird, Laughing Falcon**, and a pair of **Masked Tityras**.

We walked from the bus through the Amazonian dry forest to the area of the nest—a massive pile of sticks in the crotch of a big tree. But no Harpy. While quietly birding the area, we saw **Brown Jacamar, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Black-crowned Tityra, Lettered Aracaris, Scaled and Plumbeous Pigeons, and Thrush-like Wren**. Frank found a pair of **Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers** at a nest. It was getting quite warm and humid, so we rode the bus back to scan the trees in another area. We encountered a pair of **Swallow-winged Puffbirds** as a **Greater Yellow-headed Vulture** soared over us. Bill spotted a pair of **Burrowing Owls** along the road, and Miguel found a pair of **Long-tailed Tyrants** and a **Black-fronted Nunbird**. Miguel pointed out a beautiful yellow-flowered *Oncidium* orchid.

Back for a lunch break and some down time during the heat of the day. Frank and others found **Whistling Herons, Smooth-billed Anis**, a flock of **Red-shouldered Macaws** and many colorful butterflies including an '88'. We went back out, birding from the bus, at mid-afternoon. We saw **Gray Monjita, Gray-lined Hawk, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Guira Cuckoos**, two **Greater Rheas**, two **Red-legged Seriemas, American Kestrel**, and a mixed flock of **Parakeets** that included

Peach-fronted. We also heard Pheasant Cuckoo, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, and Moustached Wren. The near-full moon shone brightly in the sky, and Frank demonstrated phone-scope photography. Dinner was preceded by the bird list and a Caipirinha cocktail.

Day 7, Serra das Araras to Chapada dos Guimarães

Following an early breakfast, we traveled to a nearby forest trail, which was great for birds. A large orange-flowered Erythrina tree was loaded. We found **Amazonian Motmot** (heard), **Orange-winged** and **Blue-headed Parrots**, **Black-tailed Trogon**, **Straight-billed Woodcreeper**, **Dusky-headed** and **White-eyed Parakeets**, and a **Black-throated Mango**. Further along, we saw **Buff-throated Woodcreeper**, **Boat-billed**, **Rusty-margined**, and **Streaked Flycatchers**, two **Squirrel Cuckoos**, **White-backed Fire-eye**, **Great Antshrike**, and a pair of **Black-throated Antbirds**. We revisited the Harpy Eagle nest site. No luck, but a nice consolation prize was an adult **King Vulture** that perched in a nearby tree, providing extended views. Also well seen were a **Great Black-Hawk**, a pair of **White-lined Tanagers**, and both '88' and '08' butterflies. Returning to the lodge, some glimpsed a **Crimson-crested Woodpecker**.

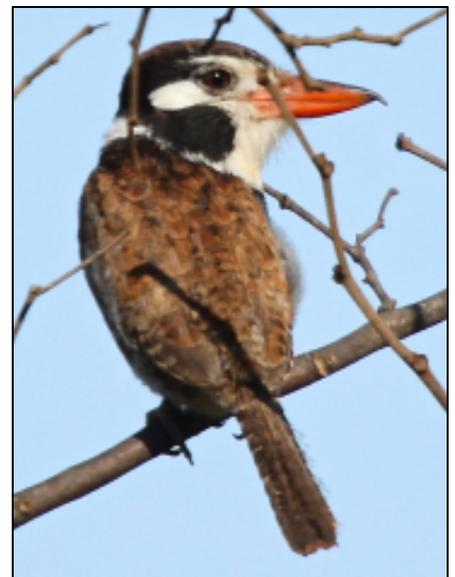


After lunch we packed up, thanked the cook and staff, and headed to our last destination, a 3.5-hour drive away. As we approached Parque Nacional da Chapada dos Guimarães, the red-cliffed landscape was striking. We arrived at our Pousada, and delighted in the drier, cooler air, fresh breeze, and stunning views. **Brazilian Cavies** fed on the lawn and an **Ornate Hawk-Eagle** soared in the distance. A gourmet dinner at the open-air dining room was a delightful way to end the day.

Day 8, Parque Nacional da Chapada dos Guimarães

Birding at sunrise on the lodge grounds produced **Sayaca** and **Palm Tanagers**, **Narrow-billed Woodcreeper**, **Green-barred Woodpecker**, **Purple-throated Euphonia**, **Planalto Hermit**, **Pale-breasted Thrush**, and a roosting pair of **Tropical Screech-Owls**. A young **Collared Peccary** roamed the dining area. We bussed to some beautiful Cerrado (savannah) habitat, which produced **Curl-crested Jays**, **Red-and-Green Macaws**, **Barred Antshrike**, **Black-throated Saltators**, **Coal-crested Finches**, **Red-crested Finches**, **White-rumped Tanager**, **Yellow-headed Caracara**, **White Woodpecker**, **Campo Flicker**, **Lesser Elaenia**, and **Chapada Flycatcher**. A **White-eared Puffbird** posed for photos. We walked a section of gated dirt road, and saw **Collared Crescentchest**, **Blue-tufted Starthroat**, **Pale-breasted Spinetail**, **Rufous-winged Antshrike**, **Fork-tailed Woodnymph**, and a pair of soaring **White-tailed Hawks**. We heard a **Red-winged Tinamou**, and Miguel pointed out the tracks of a **Maned Wolf**.

Later we birded along a forest road, where the shade kept it cooler. Colorful butterflies included a **Cracker**, red and black **Heliconias**, and stunning **Blue Morphos**. We heard and then saw a **Pheasant Cuckoo** high in a tree. Other highlights were **Amazonian Motmots**, **Black-fronted Nunbird**, **Buff-throated Saltator**, and **Swallow Tanager**. We ordered lunch





at the park, and then walked to the Veu de Noira (Bridal Veil) Waterfall. Two **Cliff Flycatchers** seemed right at home. The one-pot chicken stew lunch was delicious.

We returned to the Pousada for some downtime, but Frank and others enjoyed great views of a flock of **Swallow Tanagers**, **Peach-fronted Parakeets**, and a **Pearl Kite**. A pair of **Burrowing Owls** stood guard near their nest. A late-afternoon walk on a ranch road produced crippling views of a tooting **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl**. Mobbing birds included **White-lined** and **Gray-headed Tanagers**, **Red-crested Finch**, and **Sooty-fronted Spinetail**. As the sun set and the full moon rose, a **Small-billed Tinamou** called from a meadow and **Giant (Marine) Toads** sounded like pile-drivers. We spotlighted a male **Common Pauraque** in the meadow, and saw a female on the road.

Day 9, Chapada dos Guimarães to Cuiaba

Our last day offered a stunningly beautiful morning. We birded leisurely along a different ranch road, ticking off **Blue-crowned Trogon**, **Channel-billed Toucan**, **Amazonian Motmot**, **Blue-black Grassquits**, **Yellow-bellied Elaenia**, and pairs of striking **Blue Dacnis** and **Burnished-buff Tanagers**. Our friend, the “pet” **Collared Peccary** (dubbed “Gregory Peccary” by Barbara M.) followed us along. We enjoyed a leisurely breakfast, followed by a review of each person’s favorite sightings and experiences. We thanked lodge owner, Oswaldo, for a delightful stay, and he took our group photo. We returned to Cuiaba for flights home or hotel check-in.

Many thanks to our local guide, Miguel, and our bus driver, Manuel for a fabulous trip.



Photos: Roseate Spoonbill, Orange-backed Troupial, Capybara family.

