

# Brazil – Just Jaguars!

Naturetrek Tour Report

4th – 14th November 2025

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Jaguar yawning by Ben Windle



Ocelot by Sara Livesey



Maned Wolf by Sara Livesey



Hyacinth Macaw by Sara Livesey

Tour report kindly compiled by Julia Keddie

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Tour participants: Raul Guarnizo (leader) with ten Naturetrek clients

Species totals: over 10 days it is estimated we saw **170** species in total, broken down as: **142** birds, **17** mammals, and **11** reptiles/amphibians/arachnids. Estimated daily totals with named species are given after each day's summary. Note there is considerable overlap!

## Day 1

**Tuesday 4th November**

Overnight flight from London Heathrow to Sao Paulo.

## Day 2

**Wednesday 5th November**

### Cuiaba airport to Pouso Alegre Lodge

After two flights, from London Heathrow to Sao Paulo, and then Sao Paulo to Cuiaba, we met as group for the first time with our tour leader, Raul Guarnizo. The Brazilian heat hit us for the first time as we left the airport – it is often in the mid to high 30s at this time of year. Raul introduced us to our driver, the bags were packed, and we set off on our three-hour journey to Pouso Alegre. Along the way we stopped for lunch at a wonderful cafe, where we helped ourselves to the buffet salads and vegetables, and were then served with meat sliced from skewered joints brought to our tables. Replete, we set off again, passing through Pocone and crossing the first of the 122 bridges we encountered on our way into the deepest Pantanal. When we reached the archway marking the official start of the famous “Transpanteira” road we swapped our air-conditioned minibus for an open sided safari truck to drive into the Pantanal itself. This meant more dust and heat but brought us closer to nature, starting with the **Rufous Hornero** which had built its oven-like nest on top of the arch.

The truck pulled up at our first pool for us to observe our initial wildlife sightings. From the beginning we were in for a treat with the view of a spectacular **Roseate Spoonbill**, which Raul told us would soon be gone as the wet season kicked in. **Plumbeous Ibis** and a **Green Kingfisher** also posed nicely for us, and **Great** and **Capped Heron** were wading in the pond. And were those lumps of mud we saw floating on the water? A closer glance revealed that these were in fact the heads of the first of many **Caimans** we would see on this trip. Many of them waded with their mouths open. One had sadly succumbed (possibly due to human activity), and the carcass was being picked over by a group of **Black Vultures**. The others started to leave the pool when a small herd of cows came down to drink. Caimans don't like sharing the water with cattle due to a fear of being trodden on. Driving on we encountered our first mammals in the form of a family of **Capybaras**.

12km further on we turned into the driveway to Pouso Alegre Lodge, our first accommodation of the tour. Along the 7km driveway we encountered our first **Coatimundi**, a male travelling alone. In a field alongside the next lake, we found a large family of Capybaras, and a male **Rhea**. Males we learned, look after the young by themselves, the females abandoning the nest after they have laid the eggs, and this splendid example of manhood had taken on the parenting duties for at least 15 chicks, all following him through the grass among the domesticated animals that are farmed here, including horses, cattle, and pigs (many of which are deliberately left to mate with the wild pigs that wander around here). Our first lizard, a **Black and White Tegu**, was sunning itself on the path down to the lake.

As we gazed at the lake, we became aware of ever more Caiman. They were almost piled up next to each other on the banks. At the end of the dry season, they accumulate on the banks of the remaining water supplies, occasionally venturing into the water to hunt for fish. They do not, however, hunt humans, so, despite the scary appearance, we were able to get out of the truck and photograph them surprisingly close up, while they just ignored us.

The next pond revealed a further Green Kingfisher and a flock of **White-faced Whistling Ducks** which we had previously only observed in captivity in the UK. It felt very special to see them in the wild. We glimpsed our first **Toco Toucan**, but it was playing hard to get, and we realised we would have to be patient and hope to see more later in the trip. Some lightning flashed in the background, but the storm missed us.

Arriving at the lodge we settled into our rooms and then gathered on the veranda of the refectory building, where some of us were treated to the unusual sight of the local coati chasing away a **Crab-eating Fox**. (The fox is somewhat bigger so you might expect it to be the other way round). We were just enjoying a pre-supper drink when Raul joined us with exciting news, an ocelot had been seen in the vicinity of the lodge. Gathering our cameras we headed off into the gathering twilight. However, the first animal we encountered, in the distant gloom, was actually a **Tapir**. We were thrilled to see one, albeit briefly. Little did we know that much better sightings awaited us in the days to come. Now to wait for the **Ocelot**. No lights were allowed, apart from the torchlight held by the staff of the lodge. One torch picked up a pair of eyes glowing in the dark, and then suddenly there she was, elegant and beautiful, about as big as a medium-sized dog. Using a judicious amount of torchlight and a few scraps of meat the staff were able to ensure that the ocelot stayed long enough for us all to see, and even take low light photos of her, before we left her to slip back into the darkness while we returned to the lodge for supper.

### Species: (50)

**Mammals: (6)** Ocelot, Crab-eating fox, South American Coati, Lowland Tapir, Azara's Agouti, Capybara.

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (3)** Yacare Caiman, Black and White Tegu Lizard, Chaco Tree Frog

**Birds: (41)** Greater Rhea, White-faced Whistling Duck, Fulvous whistling Duck, Chestnut-bellied Guan, Guira Cuckoo, Smooth-billed Ani, Scaled Dove, Ruddy Ground Dove, Grey-cowled Wood Rail, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Wood Stork, Jabiru, Plumbeous Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Cocoi Heron, Great Egret, Capped Heron, Snowy Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Black-collared Hawk, Crane Hawk, Savanna Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Green Kingfisher, Toco Toucan, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, White-eyed Parakeet, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Rufous Hornero, Great Kiskadee, Grey-breasted Martin, Thrush-like Wren, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Solitary Cacique, Saffron Finch, Yellow-billed Cardinal

## Day 3

Thursday 6th November

### Walking and Safari Truck around Pouso Alegre Lodge

The lodge staff put out papaya skins and other food for the birds at 6am in the morning. All we had to do was get from our rooms to sit and watch from the benches provided. This is wildlife watching for the lazy! There were a plethora of small birds including **Scaled Dove, Ruddy Ground Dove, Rufous-bellied Thrush** (Brazil's national bird), **Shiny** and **Giant Cowbird, Purplish Jay, Narrow-billed** and **Straight-billed Woodcreepers**, and **Yellow-billed Cardinals**. After a while the larger birds made their appearance. The most impressive of these were the pair of **Bare-faced Curassows**, unusual among birds in that the female, with her crested hairdo, is more colourful than

the male. **Chestnut-bellied Guan** also wandered by. One member of our group glimpsed an **Agouti** under the trees, while the resident **Coati** ambled past.

After breakfast we set out for a jungle walk. The rules have to be strict for this. Everyone must keep in a straight line and no touching the plants. In particular we had to be aware of the plants infested with fire ants – once these get on the body you quickly find out why they are so called, and apparently it's rather painful!

One fruit we were allowed to touch was that of the Jagua tree. When sliced open the juice famously produces a temporary tattoo mark on the skin. Several of us opted to get a natural tattooed bracelet, which darkens after a few hours and lasts 10-14 days.

The Pantanal is full of termite mounds, some on the ground, some in trees. Raul made a hole in one and the occupants came rushing out to repair the damage. By the time we returned the same way an hour later the hole had been completely repaired and sealed.

Two **Cicadas** were mating at eye level nearby. After this the male will die and the female will lay her eggs beneath the surface. The larvae spend eight years underground before emerging, living as adults for about five weeks to allow the mating cycle to take place.

Further on we encountered our first tarantula, sadly squashed dead in the path. Raul pointed out an armadillo hole. Unfortunately, this was to be the nearest we got to an armadillo all trip. Still, you can't have everything, and the birds were certainly plentiful, including the **Green-barred Woodpecker**, **Campo Flicker** and the **Dull-capped** or **White-eyed Attila**. Despite the name this bird is quite striking looking, and was a life first for Raul, which made it very special.

As we returned to base, we became aware of the large numbers of **Rheas**, **Great Kiskadees**, and **Crested Caracaras** around the camp. The latter was holding fort immediately outside our door. (The wildlife comes to you in the Pantanal. We also found lizards on our patios, and one group member had a friendly frog in her bathroom). The oven like nests of the Rufous Horneros were everywhere. Peering into one of the outbuildings of the camp Raul showed us a colony of **Greater Bulldog Bats** roosting under a shelf.

Throughout the trip we were advised to keep out of the midday sun (unlike mad dogs and some Englishmen to misquote Noel Coward). So, we had a few hours to ourselves in camp, during which a couple of group members spotted **Hyacinth Macaws**. By the time the rest of us had dragged ourselves out to view them they had flown on, (such are the frustrations of birdwatching), but this was not to be our last encounter with these iconic birds.

At 4pm we set out in the truck to the hide, set up next to a small lake, spotting colourful **Red-crested Cardinals** and a **Toco Toucan**. We waited a long time at the hide enjoying the warm evening with the sunset and cans of beer. While we didn't see much on the lake itself, a **Grey-cowled Wood Rail**, spectacular **Whistling Heron**, and a **Red-footed Tortoise** entertained us.

Driving home in the dark we were lucky to see **Pauraques** (nightjars) on the road, and then even better, if more briefly, a **Collared Anteater** crossing in front of us. The smallest of Brazil's anteaters it has a prehensile tail, but

didn't wait around to demonstrate this, shambling into the bush and out of sight before any of us could grab a photo. Ah well, they did warn us that some wildlife you only see momentarily.

Close to home we stopped by a lake we had previously seen in daylight. Raul shone a torch and suddenly the dark water was lit up by dozens of bright lights shining back at us – the eyes of all the caiman we'd seen in the same spot the day before.

The camp was alive with the sound of owls, and Raul's torch was soon put to use again. Within yards of our accommodation, he found us two **Great Horned Owls** in the trees around the camp hooting at each other in the dark. A majestic sight indeed. Yet more excitement awaited us in the dining room when the owner of the Lodge showed us a **False Coral Snake** he had just found, in a bucket. (The operative word here is "false". False coral snakes won't do you any harm. Real Coral Snakes on the other hand...). Could things get any better than this? Well, yes! We were just getting up after supper when word came of **Tapirs** close by outside. Grabbing our cameras and torches we set out to the back of the camp and were rewarded with fantastic close-up views of a mother Tapir and her calf, a magical moment to end the day.

### Species: (70)

**Mammals: (7)** Southern Tamandua (aka Collared Anteater), South American Coati, Lowland Tapir, Greater Bulldog Bat, Azara's Capuchin, Azara's Agouti, Capybara

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (5)** Yacare Caiman, Red-footed Tortoise, Black and White Tegu Lizard, Chaco Tree Frog, False Coral Snake

**Birds: (58)** Greater Rhea, Muscovy Duck, Brazilian Teal, Chestnut-bellied Guan, White-throated Piping Guan, Bare-faced Curassow, Pauraque, Guira Cuckoo, Smooth-billed Ani, Scaled Dove, Ruddy Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Grey-cowled Wood Rail, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Plumbeous Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Cooi Heron, Great Egret, Capped Heron, Whistling Heron, Black Vulture, Savanna Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Toco Toucan, Green-barred Woodpecker, Campo Flicker, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, Hyacinth Macaw, Golden-collared Macaw, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Pale-legged Hornero, Rufous Hornero, Forest Eleania, Fuscous Flycatcher, Cattle Tyrant, Great Kiskadee, Rufous Casiomis, Purplish Jay, Masked Gnatcatcher, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Crested Oropendola, Solitary Cacique, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Orange-backed Troupial, Epaulet Oriole, Giant Cowbird, Shiny Cowbird, Chopi Blackbird, Saffron Finch, Red-crested Cardinal, Yellow-billed Cardinal, Dull-capped Attila

## Day 4

Friday 7th November

### Pouso Alegre to Porto Jofre and Jaguar Flotel

We had another 6am bird watch at the feeders, but this time the stars of the show were a troop of **Capuchin Monkeys** helping themselves to the papaya fruit and showing how they use their prehensile tails for swinging through the branches.

After breakfast we said goodbye to Pouso Alegre and started on the drive to the River Cuiaba. We stopped en route at the Matto Grosso hotel, where we encountered a **Green Kingfisher**, **Nanday Parakeets** with their black-

capped heads, and **Saffron Finches** among others. Further along the “Transpanteira” we spotted a group of people by the side of the road with their cameras and binoculars trained on what turned out to be a **Hyacinth Macaw** guarding its treehole nest. The tail feathers of the nest’s occupant could just be seen. We were delighted, not least because it meant that the whole group had now seen this fabled bird, the largest parrot in the world. We learned later from one of the naturalists that this nesthole is famous, being the only one suitable for Hyacinth Macaws on the Transpanteira road. This species nests only in Panama (or Manduvi) trees and further makes life difficult for itself by only eating the nuts of certain specific palm species, thus rather narrowing its habitation range. It was a further four hours to Porto Jofre, but the time seemed to whizz by as we noted **Marsh Deer**, **Southern Screamers**, many **Great White Egrets** (now occasionally spotted in the UK), **Wood Storks**, and **Black-collared Hawks**. Two people even, very briefly, spotted a **Jaguarundi** as it hurtled across the road and disappeared into the wilderness.

At Porto Jofre quayside a friendly domestic cat came to greet us, as if to remind us that we were in feline territory now. We and our luggage were moved into a motorboat for travelling upstream, and twenty minutes later we caught our first glimpse of the Jaguar Flotel which was to be our home for the next four nights. A sumptuous buffet lunch awaited us, and we were given instructions and recommendations for our forthcoming Jaguar trips. Then it was time to relax for a couple of hours in our comfortable cabins watching **Blue-and-white Swallows** and a Green Kingfisher flying to and from the dead branches in front of the boat, and even a **Tapir** swimming across the river in broad daylight.

Mid-afternoon we set off in a motorboat to explore the area. Our new bird sightings were **Large-billed Tern** and **Ringed Kingfisher** – the second largest kingfisher in the world, or the first if you don’t count Kookaburras (which some experts are trying to re-classify as puffbirds). Then, after only half an hour’s searching, we saw a group of boats all focussing on one spot of riverbank. We hurried to join them, and there she was, walking along the riverbank, our first, magnificent **Jaguar**. She sat down, licked herself, lay down, slept, woke up again, stretched, re-positioned herself. We watched, mesmerised, for nearly 2 hours, until it began to grow dark. We also saw **Savannah Hawk**, and **Black-fronted Nunbird**, but she was the main focus.

After supper the resident naturalist gave us a talk about Hyacinth Macaws. Then he filled me in on the Jaguars. Each one has its own unique face pattern, and they are carefully monitored, so he was able to tell me, based on my photos, that the name of our Jaguar was Stela, she is 3-4 years old, and has already given birth to her first cubs. All I could think was that she was one of the most beautiful creatures I had ever seen.

### Species: (64)

**Mammals: (7)** Jaguarundi, Jaguar, South American Coati, Lowland Tapir, Marsh Deer, Azara’s Capuchin, Capybara

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (2)** Yacare Caiman, Black and White Tegu Lizard

**Birds: (55)** Greater Rhea, Southern Screamer, Muscovy Duck, Brazilian Teal, Chaco Chachalaca, Chestnut-bellied Guan, White-throated Piping Guan, Smooth-billed Ani, Scaled Dove, Ruddy Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Solitary Sandpiper, Black Skimmer, Large-billed Tern, Wood Stork, Jabiru, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Plumbeous Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Western Cattle Egret, Cooi Heron, Great Egret, Capped Heron, Snowy Egret, Black Vulture, Black-collared Hawk, Savanna Hawk, Green Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Black-fronted Nunbird, Toco Toucan, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, Hyacinth

Macaw, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Nanday Parakeet, Red-billed Scythebill, Rufous Hornero, Cattle Tyrant, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Purplish Jay, White-rumped Swallow, Blue-and-white Swallow, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Crested Oropendola, Giant Cowbird, Shiny Cowbird, Saffron Finch, Red-crested Cardinal, Yellow-billed Cardinal.

## Day 5

Saturday 8th November

### Jaguar Flotel boat trips

We had the first heavy rain of the trip this morning. However, we had been warned to bring our waterproofs and plastic to cover our kit, and we Brits can handle the weather. In any case it didn't last for long. We found some new birds this morning including an **Amazon Kingfisher** and a **Striated Heron**. A **Cocoi Heron** caught a huge catfish in front of us and swallowed it in several stages. We watched, fascinated, as the fish disappeared and became a lump travelling down the throat.

We had just spotted our first **Giant River Otters** when we heard that another **Jaguar** had been sighted nearby. We were only the second boat on the scene to watch the wonderful Jaguar (named Kyyavera) pose for us for about 5-10 minutes before getting up and melting away into the jungle as if she had never been there. We returned to the place we had seen the otters and there was a family of four swimming alongside the boat, undeterred by our presence as they caught numerous fish and made delightful squeaking noises to each other. Finally, they crossed the river and continued to forage. Fish were leaping out of the water in a panic trying to get away.

Then another Jaguar call! This time there was a barrage of boats, and we had to be patient to get a good viewing of a mother Jaguar (Patricia) and her grown cub (Laison), sleeping companiably together under a spreading tree. After that it was back to the boat for lunch and a snooze of our own before the next outing.

On Saturday afternoon we played happy families, starting with a **Jabiru Stork** nest high in a tree with two fledglings practising stretching their wings. Further on we viewed a **Ringed Kingfisher** with a fish in its beak, while two ginger-coloured female **Howler Monkeys** ate in the tree above.

Another River Otter family swam across our bows, with two adults and two young cubs, one of which was being held by Mum in her mouth as they crossed the river. We were then treated to a charming cameo of otter family life when Dad otter led the way up the steep bank. Mum followed carrying cub number one in her mouth. She placed it gently on the top of the bank before returning for number two who was carried up the same way. They started to follow Dad, presumably to their holt, only for cub number two to lose its footing and fall down to the bottom of the bank again. It started squeaking piteously and Mum had to jump down the bank and haul it up all over again. Eventually, they all made it and disappeared into the greenery. A few puffs of dust floated out on the evening air and they were gone.

It is unusual to see an owl in the daytime, so we felt lucky to see a **Great Horned Owl** in a tree. However, something even better awaited us around the next bend in the river, an adult and two adolescent Great Horned Owls, "branching out" from their owl hole in a tree trunk. All three birds sat together at the end of their branch blinking at us as the sun started to set.

Well, it could hardly get any better than that. Or could it? Beginning the journey back we encountered three boats scanning the shore. A Jaguar had been reported but not seen. We stuck around for a while but then thought, we mustn't be greedy, we'd already seen three Jaguars in one day after all. Imagine our delight when suddenly the Jaguar appeared and swam across the river in front of us, followed by her five-month-old cub! The two heads bobbed across the water before the mother (Tina), made her way along the further shore while her cub Tafoukt (sex unknown), played with Mum's tail, and got tangled in the bushes. Finally, they both clambered up the bank and disappeared from view.

After that there was nothing more to do other than crack open a beer in celebration and race home before the last light went, pausing only to investigate rumours of yet another Jaguar and observe Capybaras swimming. In the evening we enjoyed excellent lectures on Ocelots and Jabiru Storks.

### Species: 58

**Mammals: (4)** Jaguar, Giant Otter, Black Howler Monkey, Capybara

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (3)** Yacare Caiman, Chaco Tree Frog, Lava Lizard

**Birds: (51)** White-throated Piping Guan, White-bearded Hermit, Guira Cuckoo, Greater Ani, Smooth-billed Ani, Picazuro Pigeon, White-tipped Dove, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Pied Plover, Wattled Jacana, Black Skimmer, Yellow-billed Tern, Large-billed Tern, Jabiru, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Plumbeous Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Striated Heron, Cooi Heron, Great Egret, Capped Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Osprey, Black-collared Hawk, Savanna Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Amazon Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Toco Toucan, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, Hyacinth Macaw, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Pale-legged Hornero, Black-backed Water Tyrant, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, White-winged Swallow, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Black-capped Donacobius, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Unicoloured Blackbird, Yellow-billed Cardinal.

## Day 6

Sunday 9th November

### Jaguar Flotel boat trips including Maned Wolf trip

It was another 6:30 start (the early tourist catches the wildlife), and before long we were directed to another female Jaguar with, we think, a slightly older cub. The views were less good this time, but we waited further along the bank in the hope that they would walk our way, but they chose to disappear instead. Around the corner however we encountered two large Capybara at very close quarters. The male (identified by the bump on his face), was munching leaves, while the female stared out of us. Neither seemed remotely alarmed by the proximity of the boat or aware of the potential closeness of Jaguars. (Actually Jaguars, as we learned at that afternoon's lecture, prefer to go for Caimans, as Capybaras can, and frequently do, outswim them).

We carried on a long way down the river observing **Roadside Hawks** among other birds. Then suddenly our boat driver screeched to a halt. He had spotted yet another Jaguar resting on the bank. This time it was our turn to alert others to what we had seen and, as the first on the scene we had a good ten minutes alone with "our" Jaguar Juliet before the next boat hove into view. Juliet seemed quite sleepy, and quite plump, possibly pregnant. Above her **Silver-beaked Tanagers** could be seen in the trees and a V formation of storks flew over. Eventually she hauled herself to her feet and melted into the trees.

We noted a family of Capybaras going for a swim on our way back for an early lunch followed by a lecture on Jaguars.

We had a long journey to our next destination, one and a half hours by boat, to a small lodge and research station on the Piquiri River, in an area of Cerrado (vast tropical savanna), known to be frequented by Maned Wolves, a solitary animal few of which live in this area of the Pantanal. En route we encountered a nervous Tapir who splashed through the water and up a bank to get away from us.

On arrival we were shown the wilderness area at the back of the compound where the wolf was most likely to appear from. The staff put down a mix of specially prepared dog food to attract the wolf to visit. We were warned to prepare for a long wait as one could come any time between 4pm and 10pm, necessitating a return in the dark. We were further advised to remain inside the compound so as not to alarm any visiting wolves and only emerge quietly once we were given a signal to do so by the lodge staff. So, we sat down on the picnic benches under a mango tree dropping its fruit (slight health and safety hazard!) **Lava Lizards** were running around the roots and up the trunk. The staff had kindly laid on coffee and cake for us, and one staff member pointed out a male **Tapir** which, defying its reputation for being shy and nocturnal was hovering up dropped mangoes from a tree just outside the gate to the compound with no apparent concern for our presence.

Less than an hour later one group member was photographing this obliging creature when he noticed one of the staff members waving at him. Turning round he suddenly realised he was being followed by a large canine which looked something like an Alsatian on stilts. The **Maned Wolf** then proceeded to walk through the entrance gate, saunter across the compound as if it owned the place, pause for a drink from the outside tap by the loos, and then casually stroll out through the back gate into the wilderness behind. We trooped out after it thus enabling us to get some excellent photos with a more natural background than the compound toilet block.

Mission accomplished, we were able to head for home in the daylight witnessing a wonderful sunset, a female Capybara suckling her two-week-old pups while the male guarded his family, **Black Skimmers**, **Yellow-billed** and **Large-billed Terns** on a sandy bank mid river and domesticated Water Buffaloes (imported from Asia) cooling themselves in the water. These are considered a nuisance by the naturalists, as they can be quite destructive.

### Species: 71

**Mammals: (6)** Jaguar, Lowland Tapir, Azara's Capuchin, Black Howler Monkey, Capybara, Maned Wolf

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (3)** Yacare Caiman, Green Iguana, Lava Lizard

**Birds: (62)** Southern Screamer, Brazilian Teal, White-throated Piping Guan, Bare-faced Curassow, Band-tailed Nighthawk, Guira Cuckoo, Greater Ani, Smooth-billed Ani, Picazuro Pigeon, Ruddy Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Pied Plover, Wattled Jacana, Black Skimmer, Yellow-billed Tern, Large-billed Tern, Wood Stork, Jabiru, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Plumbeous Ibis, Buff-necked Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Western Cattle Egret, Cocoi Heron, Great Egret, Capped Heron, Snowy Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Osprey, Black-collared Hawk, Savanna Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Roadside Hawk, Amazon Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Toco Toucan, Campo Flicker, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, Hyacinth Macaw, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Rufous Hornero, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Purplish Jay, White-winged Swallow, Southern

Rough-winged Swallow, Masked Gnatcatcher, Crested Oropendola, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Giant Cowbird, Unicoloured Blackbird, Silver-beaked Tanager, Sayaca Tanager.

## Day 7

Monday 10th November

### Jaguar Flotel boat trips

We met our first **Jaguar** of the day not long after our 6:30am start. We thought it was probably Stela. She posed for us for some time. Eventually we tore ourselves away and set off to see what else we could find, which turned out to be another Jaguar. (Possibly either Juliet or Kyyerva). She kept us entertained for a long time, posing on the bank, coming down into the water hyacinth plants that clog the waterways around here, having a bath, poking her wet head up, going back down, walking along the bank, sitting down again and generally showing us every angle. A rare **Helmeted Manakin** did its best to distract us in the trees overhead.

We took a new route down the Three Brothers River, narrower than we were used to. There were several **Caimans** here, and one was patiently waiting at the feet of a heron to see if it would drop its recently caught fish. The caiman was to be disappointed however, when the heron flew off with the fish still in its beak. A little further on we had an excellent sighting of a **Gold Tegu Lizard** on the bank, drinking from the river. He quickly moved on when a loud splash indicated that a caiman had entered the water next to him.

On the way back for lunch we discovered a tree covered with **Neotropic Cormorants** and **Cattle Egrets**. On the tree behind **Green Iguanas** were making good use of an abandoned stork's nest.

In the afternoon we found one more Jaguar, but it was lurking in the reeds and views were poor compared to earlier experiences. So, we left him/her to it and set out to look further afield. **Capybara** and Caimans were seen but the real stars of the evening were the kingfishers. We had taken a side turning into a smallish creek, mostly covered with water hyacinth which the boat driver did well to steer us through. We were privileged to see all five Brazilian kingfishers, the **Ringed, Amazon, Green**, plus two new ones: the **Rufous-Green Kingfisher** and the tiny but brightly jewelled **Pygmy Kingfisher** which Raul pointed out using his laser. All this plus **Yellow-chevroned Parakeets** and a **Capped Heron** too! Towards the end of the creek, we realised we were drifting into a mass of horseflies so beat a hasty retreat before cracking open the beers and heading home while enjoying the colours of the spectacular sunset with **Band-tailed Nighthawks** flying above us.

**Species: 67**

**Mammals: (2)** Jaguar, Capybara

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (5)** Yacare Caiman, Green Iguana, Gold Tegu, Chaco Tree Frog, Lava Lizard

**Birds: (60)** Southern Screamer, Brazilian Teal, White-throated Piping Guan, Bare-faced Currawong, Band-tailed Nighthawk, Guira Cuckoo, Picazuro Pigeon, Ruddy Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Black Skimmer, Yellow-billed Tern, Large-billed Tern, Wood Stork, Jabiru, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Plumbeous Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Striated Heron, Western Cattle Egret, Cooi Heron, Capped Heron, Snowy Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Osprey, Black-collared Hawk, Crane Hawk, Savanna Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Amazon Kingfisher, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Toco Toucan, Crested Caracara,

Monk Parakeet, Yellow-chevroned Parakeet, Hyacinth Macaw, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Pale-legged Hornero, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Helmeted Manakin, White-winged Swallow, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Black-capped Donacobius, Solitary Cacique, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Orange-backed Troupial, Giant Cowbird, Unicoloured Blackbird, Sayaca Tanager, Mississippi Kite.

## Day 8

Tuesday 11th November

### Jaguar Flotel to SouthWild Pantanal Lodge, River Pixaim

It was time to leave the flotel after breakfast and we returned by boat to Porto Jofre. At the quayside we noted a **Green Kingfisher** and two magnificent **Hyacinth Macaws**, one munching from the nut tray put out for him.

We drove back along the Transpanteria noting the re-building of one of the 122 bridges along the route, and seeing **Southern Screamers**, **Wood Storks**, and many **Great White Egrets** and **Caimans** along the way. A black, male **Howler Monkey** was briefly glimpsed on the ground and an adult **False Water Cobra** snake slithered across the road in front of us. We slowed down to take a closer look at it, however, unfortunately, before any of us could get a good photo of it a truck whizzing along in the opposite direction caused it to remove itself at high speed.

We arrived at the Southwild Pantanal Lodge, on the banks of the River Pixaim, in time for lunch, to be greeted by a **Jabiru** family wandering nonchalantly around the grounds. Their huge nest, perched on a nearby treetop with a viewing platform opposite, was also home to **Monk Parakeets** and **Greater Thornbirds**. **Wattled Jacana** were moving through the water hyacinth on the river and **Plumbeous Ibis** showed no sign of concern at assorted humans moving about.

After an afternoon at leisure, we followed a marked trail into the forest, passing a sign warning us we were in Jaguarland and should not go further on our own. We were heading for a hide specially constructed to observe Ocelots. Here we waited in silence for two hours as the evening drew in. No Ocelots emerged but we enjoyed the wonderful sounds of cicadas and other jungle insects as the darkness fell. On our walk back we encountered a baby **Tarantula** on the path (fortunately nobody stepped on it) and outside the restaurant entrance a number of **Chaco Tree Frogs** were seen on the patio plants and doors.

**Species: (55)**

**Mammals: (3)** Greater Bulldog Bat, Black Howler Monkey, Capybara

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (5)** Yacare Caiman, Black and White Tegu Lizard, Lava Lizard, False Water Cobra, Chaco Tree Frog, Bolivian Red Rump Tarantula.

**Birds: (47)** Undulated Tinamou, Southern Screamer, Chaco Chachalaca, Red-throated Piping Guan, Striped Cuckoo, Picazuro Pigeon, Ruddy Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Black Skimmer, Large-billed Tern, Wood Stork, Jabiru, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Plumbeous Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Western Cattle Egret, Cocoli Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Black Vulture, Osprey, Black-collared Hawk, Savanna Hawk, Amazon Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, Hyacinth Macaw, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Rufous Hornero, Greater Thornbird, Grey-chested Cacholote, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Black-crowned Tityra, Purplish Jay, Southern Rough-

winged Swallow, Thrush-like Wren, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Shiny Cowbird, Saffron Finch, Red-crested Cardinal, Yellow-billed Cardinal.

## Day 9

Wednesday 12th November

### SouthWild Pantanal Lodge Boat trips and walks

The bird feeders at the Lodge are right outside the restaurant area allowing us relaxed views of the wildlife over breakfast. One group member spotted a **Crab-eating Fox** eating the fallen mangoes for his breakfast. This was followed by our first boat trip down the Pixaim River. First crack out of the box was a stunningly beautiful **Sunbittern**. Further downstream **Shiny Cowbirds** were picking insects off the backs of the **Capybaras**. Then our boat driver stopped suddenly, in front of a particular tree, which apparently had a rare bird in it. We stared helplessly, until Raul got out his laser and showed us that the piece of dead branch we all thought we were looking at was in fact the extraordinary **Great Potoo**, a master of disguise despite its size.

Our boat drivers were carrying a supply of fish which they threw into the water so we could watch and photograph the local **Black-collared Hawks** and **Ringed Kingfishers** catching their prey using talons and beak respectively. The river proved a mecca for birdlife of all sorts including **Silver-beaked Tanagers**, **Mississippi Kite**, **Green Ibis**, **Bare-faced Ibis**, **Roadside Hawk**, **Grey-cowled Wood Rail**, and **Little Blue Heron**. The undoubted star bird however, albeit only glimpsed briefly, was the **Zigzag Heron**, flying across the water. We could tell by Raul's excitement that this was a pretty special bird, small, reclusive and rarely seen, an ornithologist's dream true.

After lunch and a rest, we did a bird walk around the Lodge grounds in very humid conditions. The **Jabiru** weren't bothered in the slightest, walking right up to us in hope of a treat. A **Capybara** family with two cubs were enjoying a cooling dip in the river. **Brown-chested Martins** sat on the wires and a **Little Woodpecker** flitted in and out of the trees. An utterly adorable **Chotoy Spinetail** posed most obligingly right in front of us, allowing us to admire him from all sides. Other new birds included the **Large Eleania** (actually rather small), and **Orange-backed Troupial**, both seen from a distance, the tiny **Common Tody -Flycatcher** flitting about (too much flitting and not enough posing!) and a very active **Narrow-billed Woodcreeper** which was happily climbing up everything vertical, including a concrete pole (not too many insect feeding opportunities there).

In the evening, we spent another two hours in the Ocelot hide, but cats being the contrary animals they are, none appeared. To make up for this we spotted a **Brown Brocket Deer** on the way back, and then, just inside the Lodge gates, a fully grown **Bolivian Red Rump Tarantula** spider. Raul picked it up and took it to the restaurant door where it was admired by one and all and even handled by a few brave souls. (They are well-known for their docility apparently, but you wouldn't think it from their appearance).

### Species: 101

**Mammals: (5)** Crab-eating Fox, Gray Brocket Deer, Greater Bulldog Bat, Proboscis Bat, Capybara

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (4)** Gold Tegu Lizard, Chaco Tree Frog, Lava Lizard, Bolivian Red Rump Tarantula

**Birds: (92)** Southern Screamer, Muscovy Duck, Chaco Chachalaca, Chestnut-bellied Guan, White-throated Piping Guan, Bare-faced Curassow, Great Potoo, Glittering-throated Emerald, Guira Cuckoo, Greater Ani, Smooth-

billed Ani, Picazuro Pigeon, Ruddy Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Grey-cowled Wood Rail, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Solitary Sandpiper, Large-billed Tern, Sunbittern, Jabiru, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Plumbeous Ibis, Green Ibis, Bare-faced Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Striated Heron, Western Cattle Egret, Cocoi Heron, Great Egret, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Black-collared Hawk, Crane Hawk, Savanna Hawk, Roadside Hawk, Amazon Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Toco Toucan, Little Woodpecker, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, Yellow-chevroned Parakeet, Hyacinth Macaw, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Pale-legged Hornero, Rufous Hornero, Rufous-fronted Thornbird, Greater Thornbird, Rusty-backed Spinetail, Grey-chested Cachoote, Chotoy Spinetail, Great Antshrike, Large Elaenia, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Black-backed Water Tyrant, Cattle Tyrant, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Social Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Streaked Flycatcher, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Black-tailed Tityra, Purplish Jay, Brown-chested Martin, Grey-breasted Martin, Black-capped Donacobius, Thrush-like Wren, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Solitary Cacique, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Orange-backed Troupial, Giant Cowbird, Shiny Cowbird, Greyish Baywing, Bluish-grey Saltator, Silver-beaked Tanager, Saffron Finch, Red-crested Cardinal, Yellow-billed Cardinal, Sayaca Tanager, Zigzag Heron, Mississippi Kite.

## Day 10

Thursday 13th November

### SouthWild Pantanal Lodge Boat trips and walks

It's great when the wildlife comes to you. On opening our doors onto the patio this morning, we found a long, thin snake in residence. We tiptoed around it trying not to disturb it with our cameras only to find that it was actually fairly chilled out and relaxed in our presence. Leaving it to get on with its morning bask we went on a jungle walk to the Monkey Tower, an observation post for the local Simians. En route we found a host of tiny grasshoppers, just hatched out, devouring a plant. Further down the path Raul pointed out the entrance to a tarantula's den, and nearby the entrance to a solitary wasp's den. This was bad news for the local tarantulas as solitary wasps lay their eggs inside the tarantula's body. The resultant larvae hatch out and then eat the tarantula from inside out. Notable plants along the trail included flowering Bromeliads and Cacti covered with bright pink fruits, much sought after by monkeys and other mammals.

On arriving at the Tower, the Lodge staff put out fruit, and we climbed up to the platform to watch a troop of endearing **Capuchin Monkeys** devour them. This is one group of wild animals we didn't have to be quiet around as they are positively encouraged by the sound of human voices. Raul and another staff member then did their best to attract Howler Monkeys by imitating their call. It sounded rather impressive but the Howlers weren't buying it and stayed away.

Raul took us back via another path, only to find a tree had fallen across it. Whipping out the machete he had thoughtfully brought with him he proceeded to hack a path around the tree to let us through. A **Gilded Hummingbird** looked down on us and through the foliage we could just about see the small, shy, black **Matto Grosso Antbird**, the only bird endemic to the area. However, the morning's star bird was a spectacularly colourful **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, perching on the "Jaguarland" sign catching flies in its beak and giving us excellent views. Back to the Lodge for a doze in the hammocks before lunch. We weren't the only ones to find the Lodge facilities comfortable. On getting up to put his boots on after lunch one group member found a baby snake inside his abandoned sock! We all took turns in handling it (it's harmless to humans, only venomous if you're a frog) while

Raul identified it as the **Spirit Diminutive Snake**. It's a long name for a small creature, so we called it the Sock Snake instead. It was probably a relative of the larger specimen we had seen in the morning.

Having de-snaked ourselves we set off on another boat trip. Once more the river gave us some spectacular birds including close-up views of male and female **Pygmy Kingfishers**, **Amazon** and **Ringed Kingfishers** and a juvenile female **Green Kingfisher**. A **Grey-cowled Wood Rail** was poking around on the water's edge accompanied by her three chicks, a first even for Raul. Even better was a **Sungrebe** which Raul assured us was one of those species people will cross the world just to see. Our boat drivers threw some more fish to encourage the **Black-collared hawk** to demonstrate his hunting skills for our cameras.

We returned to our last evening at the Lodge to be welcomed by the staff serving us Caipirinhas, Brazil's national cocktail, with some nibbles alongside. They offered to demonstrate how it was made and quickly got two male volunteers from the group mixing up a second round of drinks which obviously we then had to drink too. The cocktail was delicious. It was also rather strong, and we staggered off to the Ocelot hide again, for a third attempt to see the Ocelot, but sadly it was not to be. Fortunately, we were too cheerful to mind much.

After supper we piled into the safari truck for a night drive. We spotted a **Brocket Deer** and a **Tapir**. We also spotted some lightning flashes from the huge electrical storm which was drawing nearer, catching up with us just as we turned for home. We got absolutely drenched, and the electricity at the Lodge failed as we returned, meaning we had to find our way to our beds by torchlight.

#### **Species: 84**

**Mammals: (9)** Crab-eating Fox, Lowland Tapir, Marsh Deer, Gray Brocket, Greater Bulldog Bat, Azara's Capuchin, Brazilian Guinea Pig, Capybara, Brazilian Rabbit.

**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (5)** Yacare Caiman, Gold Tegu, Chaco Tree Frog, Lava Lizard, Spirit Diminutive Snake.

**Birds: (70)** Muscovy Duck, Chaco Chachalaca, Chestnut-bellied Guan, White-throated Piping Guan, Bare-faced Curassow, Greater Ani, Smooth-billed Ani, Little Cuckoo, Picazuro Pigeon, Scaled Dove, Ruddy Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Sungrebe, Grey-cowled Wood Rail, Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Solitary Sandpiper, Sunbittern, Wood Stork, Jabiru, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Plumbeous Ibis, Green Ibis, Bare-faced Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Striated Heron, Cocoli Heron, Great Egret, Little Blue Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Black-collared Hawk, Snail Kite, Savanna Hawk, Roadside Hawk, Amazon Kingfisher, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Toco Toucan, Little Woodpecker, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, Yellow-chevroned Parakeet, Rufous Hornero, Greater Thornbird, Grey-crested Cacholote, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Cattle Tyrant, Great Kiskadee, Streaked Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Rufous Casiornis, Purplish Jay, Masked Gnatcatcher, Chalk-browed Mockingbird, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Solitary Caciue, Yellow-rumped Caciue, Shiny Cowbird, Greyish Baywing, Bluish-grey Saltator, Silver-beaked Tanager, Saffron Finch, Yellow-billed Cardinal, Mississippi Kite, Gilded Hummingbird, Matto Grosso Antbird.

## Day 11

Friday 14th November

## SouthWild Pantanal Lodge to Cuiaba airport

It rained hard overnight and was still drizzling as we got on board the boats for one final river trip. This was obviously the start of the wet season. However, as we moved downriver the weather brightened up. We got as far as the Matto Grosso hotel (which we had previously visited way back on day 3). **Brown-chested Martins** flew around us. The boat driver threw fish for the **Black-collared Hawk** for the last time and tried to interest a **Ringed Kingfisher** in diving for us, but the latter had evidently already breakfasted because he just sat in a tree and ignored us. On the way back we were privileged to have further excellent sightings of **Rufous-tailed Jacamars**, **Sunbitterns**, **Sungrebes**, and **Greater Anis**. Finally, we had good views of female **Howler Monkeys** in the trees. The last “new” species that we encountered on our trip were **Collared Plover**, **White-fronted Nunbird**, **Pale-crested Woodpecker**, **Yellow-olive Flatbill** and **Squirrel Cuckoo**. We returned in the steamy heat to pack and have lunch. Then it was off to the airport, but not before seeing two gorgeous **Giant Ameiva Lizards** under the bird feeders.

**Species: 68**

**Mammals: (4)** Crab-eating Fox, Marsh Deer, Black Howler Monkey, Capybara.

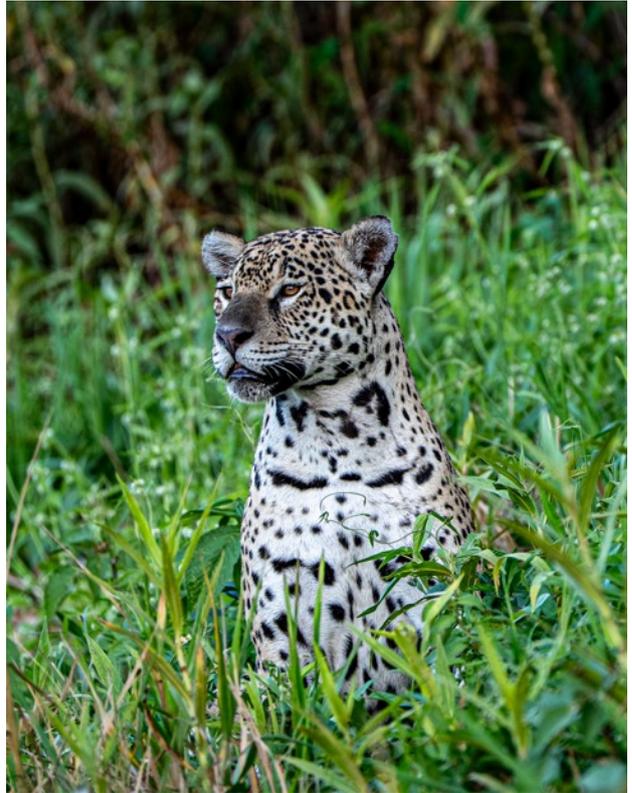
**Reptiles/Amphibians/Arachnids: (4)** Yacare Caiman, Chaco Tree Frog, Spirit Diminutive Snake, Giant Ameiva Lizard.

**Birds: (60)** Chaco Chachalaca, Chestnut-bellied Guan, White-throated Piping Guan, Bare-faced Currawong, Greater Ani, Smooth-billed Ani, Squirrel Cuckoo, Picazuro Pigeon, Scaled Dove, Ruddy Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Sungrebe, Grey-cowled Wood Rail, Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Collared Plover, Wattled Jacana, Sunbittern, Jabiru, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Plumbeous Ibis, Buff-necked Ibis, Bare-faced Ibis, Striated Heron, Capped Heron, Little Blue Heron, Black Vulture, Osprey, Black-collared Hawk, Snail Kite, Amazon Kingfisher, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, White-fronted Nunbird, Pale-crested Woodpecker, Crested Caracara, Monk Parakeet, Yellow-chevrons Parakeet, Turquoise-fronted Amazon, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Nanday Parakeet, Gold-collared Macaw, Rufous Horned, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Yellow-olive Flatbill, Cattle Tyrant, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Brown-chested Martin, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Solitary Cacique, Greyish Baywing, Bluish-grey Saltator, Silver-beaked Tanager, Saffron Finch, Yellow-billed Cardinal.

A wonderful 10 days to be remembered always. Many thanks to our guide Raul and all the lovely Brazilian staff who helped make it so special.



Rufous-tailed Jacamar by Julia Keddie



Jaguar by Ben Windle



Capybara family by Ben Windle



Caimen by Sara Livesey

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