

Sunrise Birding LLC
Jardim da Amazonia & Pantanal
TRIP REPORT
September 20 – October 1, 2017



Report by Diego Calderon

*Photos by Diego Calderon unless otherwise noted, top to bottom:
Toco Toucan, Horned Sungem, Red-legged Seriema, Giant Anteater, Great Potoo, Yellow Anaconda.*



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Leaders: Eduardo Patrial & Diego Calderon

Top 10 birds of the trip voted by all participants:

- **Horned Sungem** – our last target of the trip... persistence paid and this jewel gave us the most amazing views!
- **Sunbittern** – a true beautiful iconic Neotropical beast that entertained us all quite a lot in the Pantanal.
- **Hyacinth Macaw** – simply one of the emblematic birds of this trip.
- **Blue Finch** – a rarity we were lucky to find and enjoy thoroughly on the road.
- **Band-tailed Manakin** – one of the most beautiful showy birds of the trip.
- **Red-legged Seriema** – One of those you think you only going to see far way until one decides to come to tape and walk by few meters away from the group.
- **Agami Heron** – one of the fanciest on its family that always makes it to the top 10!
- **Jaguar** – always sneaking into the top10 bird list... jejeje
- **Great Horned Owl** – seen at daylight roosting and heard one night.
- **Cone-billed Tanager** – one of the rarest and most range restricted of the birds we got.

A special mention also goes for the cooperative Red-billed Scythebill, the bulky Buff-necked Ibis, dueting White-rumped Tanagers, the surprise appearance of **Razor-billed Curassows**, the always attractive Whistling Heron, those cooperative Black-girdled Barbets in the canopy, the colorful Orange-backed Troupial, the lovely Sungrebe swimming nearby, the Greater Rhea with chicks crossing the Transpantaneira, the friendly Bare-faced Curassow female, those showy Capped Herons, and the always amazing Amazonian Umbrellabird.



September 20

After breakfast at our hotel, we left Cuiaba driving north for some 4 solid hours until we reached our destination at Jardim Da Amazonia near Sao José do Rio Claro. On the way, we nailed down plenty of **Greater Rheas** in the fields, as well as Toco Toucan, Southern Caracara, and Yellow-chevron Parakeet at a gas station stop.

We got to our place and explored the grounds before lunch to find Point-tailed Palmcreeper and Sulphury Flycatcher, both specialized birds on Mauritia palms that abound around the lodge (around an artificial pond holding several huge Pirarucú fish – the biggest freshwater one on the planet). There were plenty of Yellow-rumped Caciques, Bare-necked Fruitcrows, and Swallow Tanagers.



Noon was pretty hot, so some of us went to enjoy the natural crystal-clear waters swimming pool while Forest Elaenias called above. A late afternoon stroll around the entrance road was slow, but got us one of the main key birds at the place: Tooth-billed Wren crazily singing in the open. We eventually reached an open area with Burrowing Owls, Southern Caracaras, Picazuro Pigeons and other usual suspects. We ended our day at the entrance road swamp where we got on a Blue-and-Yellow Macaw turmoil with dozens of these huge beasts feeding, playing, and fighting, along with Red-bellieds, Blue-wingeds, and Red-shouldered Macaws against a beautiful sunset!

September 21

This morning after an early breakfast, we boarded our two skiffs and went up the Rio Claro River for some 20 minutes to a stake out lagoon. There, after just a few minutes we got our target of the day: a rare Brazilian endemic, not seen by many people as it was lost for a hundred years, the **Cone-billed Tanager** (Photo: Dave Curtis). Dave, Carmelit and Eduardo got great photos of this oddity. We also enjoyed views of an amazing Spotted Puffbird nesting in a cavity of a termite nest and a Blackish Antbird couple that came to tape not giving great views.



We then moved further in the river and after seeing the regular tourist show (a section of the river that gets on fire by the local boat drivers due to natural methane release), we nailed down some good birds including the endemic **Glossy Antshrike** (Photo: Eduardo Patrial), and both Band-tailed and Silvered Antbirds near the river shore. We then hit a trail where we got amazing views of Black-girdled Barbets, Amazonian Antshrikes, Orange-cheeked Parrot, Grayish Mourners and finally a lovely cooperative Flame-crested Manakin.

After lunch and a shorter rest than yesterday (today was not so hot and sunny), we went to an area that delivered a gang of Red-necked Aracaris, the good looking White-banded Swallow, Bar-breasted Piculets, several Blackish Nightjars, and our first try –not very successful, with the diminutive Fiery-capped Manakin. We went for some owling near the lodge, but came empty to dinner with only



a heard-only Great Horned Owl that actually made it to the top10 list of the trip!

September 22

Today we also used the boats to move a bit down the river to do the Piquia Trail that provided good views of Black-throated Antbird, White-faced Nunbird, Screaming Piha for the bushwhackers, and some cool manakins including female Red-headed and Snow-capped, as well as the diminutive Fiery-capped and the Dwarf Tyrant. We did have to work a bit harder for the small birds here, but eventually got good views of White-flanked, Dot-winged and Rufous-winged Antwrens.

When it got quite hot, we left the trail and came back to hotel for lunch. After a nice rest that included swimming in the river and pools, we reassembled at 3:30 pm and went into another near trail nailing down Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Forest Elaenia, Bar-breasted Piculet, and others, to earn our prize of the day: a couple of Razor-billed Curassows foraging and walking in the open in a forest edge... big bird of the day indeed!

Deeper in the trail we worked on Natterer's Slaty Antshrike, Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant, more Dwarf Tyrant Manakins, and others. Coming back to lodge, a Gould's Toucanet couple flew-by but it was almost dark and not many could see even the shape. Again this night, owling was not productive at all.

September 23

Our last morning in the fantastic Jardim da Amazonia we devoted to the Jatobá Trail where we started with good views of Yellow-crowned Parrots/Amazons and a couple of Pink-throated Becards; Chestnut-eared Aracari also was giving great views near the lodge grounds just starting the morning. We called in a nice Gould's Toucanet for views, as well as the good-looking Rose-breasted Chat and Red-headed Manakin. Even though the morning was



relatively hot, we got good views of some more birds like Plain-brown, Black-banded and Olivaceous Woodcreepers, as well as Black-faced and Blue Dacnis, and an obliging couple of Gray-chested Greenlets. We came back to lodge nailing down all the open area more common flycatchers (Rusty-margined, Tropical Kingbird and Piratic) and the loads of tanagers in the gardens (Palm, Sayaca, Blue-gray, Silver-beaked, Swallow). We then started our drive back to Cuiaba seeing more Greater Rheas, Southern Caracaras, **Blue-and-Yellow Macaws**, and Picazuro Pigeons, among others. We arrived at our hotel, met with the rest of the group, and had a nice dinner before a well-deserved rest in preparation for our main Pantanal trip the next day.

September 24

Today we embarked into our Transpantaneira adventure... we started with a nice stop for **Sunbitterns** really close along with Thrush-like Wrens and Purplish Jays. We stopped at a giant Jabiru nest platform with two juvenile birds and an adult, got our first Southern Screamers, and a Gray Brocket Deer. There were plenty of Southern Caracara, Savannah and Roadside Hawks flying around. We got several Limpkin and Buff-necked Ibis alongside the road and some distant Plumbeous Ibis that we hoped to see well in the next days.



We reached our Hotel Pantanal Mato Grosso and the feeders welcomed us: Yellow-billed Cardinals (and one good looking Red-crested), Bay-winged, Bronzy and Giant Cowbirds eating seed, and Orange-backed Troupial and Grayish Saltator eating fruits, while a couple of Brown Capuchin Monkeys rested in the trees above. Around lunchtime, Richard found a Marsh Deer in a swampy area next to the hotel, and Mick photographed a nice Crane Hawk in the river.

We went for a boat ride in the afternoon, nailing down all the kingfishers (Ringed, Amazon, Green, Green-and-rufous, and American Pygmy), as well as a load of egrets and herons - Great, Cattle and Snowy Egrets, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, and Cocoi, Little Blue, Striated, the fancy Agami, Whistling (in the road earlier), Capped, and Boat-billed Herons. The Pixaim River was full of Pantanal Yacare Caimans and Capybaras. We visited a roosting Great Potoo, and the little walk to reach it delivered goodies like Pale-crested Woodpecker and Red-billed Scythebill. Just before dinner, we went looking for night birds and only got distant views of Spot-tailed Nightjar. A **Brazilian Tapir** came



twice to feed on mangos in front of our rooms and we had such amazing views of this huge animal.



September 25

This morning some of us started early and cleaned up a nearby road; all our targets were falling one by one, namely Rusty-backed Antwren, Masked Gnatcatcher, **Chotoy Spinetail**, Rufous-fronted and Greater Thornbirds, Green-backed Becard, Red-crested Finch, Greenish and Large Elaenias, and others. We went back to lodge for breakfast, and soon we were birding the trail behind the lodge with the rest of the group. We started with a nice couple of the highly restricted Mato Grosso Antbirds and a couple of Large-billed Antwrens. Helmeted Manakins were conspicuous at the beginning of the trail making several showy appearances. Rufous-browed Peppershrike and Band-tailed Antbird got us busy, as well as Blue-crowned Trogon that only came for a quick glimpse. Fuscous Flycatcher was very obliging and

posed very nice for photos while a Gray-headed Tanager tried to distract us. We returned to lodge for lunch and enjoyed the show of a couple dozen Southern Caracaras coming to be fed, as well as 3 Giant River Otters swimming and fishing nearby our place.

After lunch we continued south making a stop that only allowed us to hear Yellow-collared Macaw, but we got to see a nice nesting Bat Falcon couple, as well as Olivaceous and Buff-throated Woodcreepers. A little further got us enjoying a Great Horned Owl, as well as Unicolored Blackbirds found by Karen, more Southern Screamers, and finally a couple of **Scarlet-headed Blackbirds** from the bus. Our landing at the Porto Jofre hotel was serenaded by some Hyacinth Macaws that we enjoyed with better light tomorrow.



September 26

After an early breakfast we embarked on our boat in the Cuiaba River to go to look for Jaguars, our main target for the day. Some usual river birds were seen like Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns as well as Black Skimmers. Capybaras and Pantanal Caiman abounded so we knew we were on the right area to look for jaguars. We had not been yet even an hour and a half roving all channels of the river, when our boat driver got a radio call informing him of a Jaguar that was showing, so we sped towards the area. We arrived and there were at least 10 boats with some 80 people watching this lazy big male that was a pretty washed pale color.



We then keep moving, passed by again to see same male, and we finished our morning seeing another Jaguar that was devouring a huge caiman in the grasses... what a show!

With 3 sightings in the bag, plus a Yellow Anaconda, we returned happy and elated back to lodge for lunch where we also enjoyed and photograph the charismatic **Hyacinth Macaws** at close range.



For the afternoon session, the group split and I went with Nancy on the boat again nailing down 4 more jaguars (a breast-feeding female, a flirting couple, and a young male), Giant River Otters, and added Pied Lapwing for the trip list. The rest of the group explored trails and areas near the hotel finding Subtropical Doradito, a Least Bittern, a showy Amazonian Motmot, Cinereous-breasted Spinetail, and beautiful Band-tailed Manakins. What an incredible day we all had!

September 27

An early start gave us great views of some Seedeaters on the lodge grounds (Double-collared, Tawny-bellied, and Dark-throated) as well as time to enjoy Toco Toucan, Hyacinth Macaw, Guira Cuckoo and Bare-faced Curassow at close range just before breakfast. We then made road stops for amazingly close views of Scarlet-headed Blackbirds and catch up finally with Golden-collared Macaws. Also, Rufous Casinornis came for the list.



We stopped at Hotel Mato Grosso on the Pixaim River for lunch and a superb Marsh Deer was on show in the hotel swamp. Our entrance to Pousada Pousa Alegre was highlighted by nailing down all the ground doves, namely Ruddy Ground-Dove, Picui Ground-Dove, Blue Ground-Dove and the much rarer **Long-tailed Ground-Dove** (Photo: Dave Curtis).

After checking in, we went for a walk near the entrance road but not before enjoying a couple of Brazilian Tapirs at close range; the afternoon was relatively slow but we were lucky working on some stunning woodpeckers getting great views: Pale-crested, Crimson-crested, and Golden-green. More Rufous Casinornis were seen and we got our first quick views of Flavescent Warblers and plenty more Toco Toucans and both Blue-throated and Red-throated Piping-Guans.

September 28

The start of the morning was highlighted by a Giant Anteater that decided to come and inspect/sniff me up close and personal. It was quite a magical experience having this furry beast so close and for everyone to see it and have the chance of photographing it while it

stress-free walked around and Carmelit, Dave and Nancy got quite nice pictures backstage. Returning to the lodge we had amazing close views of a Great Rufous Woodcreeper that Lynda and Alison found, and also a couple of Hyacinth Macaws were just perched on top of a dead tree giving everyone a great show. We did the boardwalk finding the most obliging Black-collared Hawks ever as well as several “chocolates”, AKA as Rufous (Gray-crested) Cacholote. Scarlet-headed Blackbirds were also a nice delicacy as we got to enjoy in the swamp.

We left the great Pousada Pousa Alegre and drove a short distance to Piuval Lodge finding several close Greater Rheas in the road, a couple of White-wedged Piculets, and our first Campo Flickers around the lodge entrance road. After a glimpse of a very distant Red-legged Seriema, we called one in and had the closest Seriema ever!

In the afternoon we took a short trip to look for the restricted Black-bellied Antwren that we indeed got great looks at along with Flavescent Warbler and Cinnamon-throated Hermit. We visited the big bay lake seeing a load of water birds, but more remarkable was when coming back to lodge we found a small pond with a gathering containing three Sunbittern, two Gray-necked Wood-Rail (nowadays named Gray-cowled), and a couple of **Plumbeous Ibis**... what a show! We went for some owling this night and came empty.

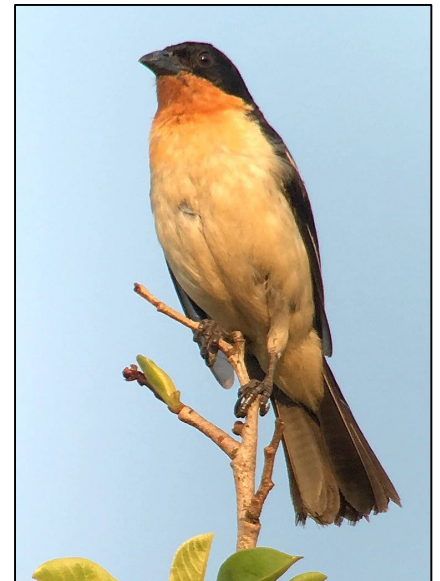


September 29

Very early, we did a short walk from the lodge, and found my only Pantanal lifer on this trip: **White-fronted Woodpecker**... what a beautiful bird! We returned to lodge for breakfast and went to look for the endemic Planalto Slaty-Antshrike and again the Black-bellied Antwren both seen very well. A couple of Russet-crowned Crakes responded really well in the dry forest vegetation and came to offer great views.

Later on the bay lake, some of us got glimpses and views of a very secretive –but responsive- Gray-breasted Crake. We also finally connected with the good-looking Peach-fronted Parakeets.

We went back to Cuiaba, had a short lunch stop in town, and hit a very good road to enjoy close quality views of our first Cerrado birds: Coal-crested and Blue Finches, and Chapada Flycatchers. We kept driving and climbed up the table-top formation of Chapada dos Guimarães and went to another good road where we got our second good batch of specialties in the form of Curl-crested Jay, White-eared Puffbird, **White-rumped** and Shrike-like (AKA White-banded) Tanagers, Rufous-winged Antshrike, and a very cool White-naped Xenopsaris. We went back to hotel really happy having seen all these Cerrado birds in advance and enjoyed a great dinner.



September 30

Some of us had a sumptuous very early breakfast and went to the Aguas Frias road where besides the Cerrado specialties we had on the previous day, we connected with Collared Crescentchest and spent some good time looking for a responsive Spot-backed Puffbird and eventually got the bird. It got quite windy so we left, picked up the rest of the group at hotel (getting Blue-crowned Trogon and Amazonian Motmot in the gardens), and went to the Jamaca Valley.



On our first stop, we had some fine birding nailing down and having good views of Tataupa Tinamou, as well as a very cooperative **Band-tailed Manakin** and some glimpses of Fiery-capped Manakin. It got a bit quiet, so much so that even Plain Antvireos were entertaining us. We decided to move to another road where we got Southern Antpitt and a combo of Pale-breasted, Rufous-bellied, and White-necked Thrushes.

After lunch, we visited the trail at the viewpoint of the Pousada Penhasco where we enjoyed Cliff Flycatcher, Biscutate Swifts, and a soaring Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle. Some went for a Pheasant Cuckoo and succeeded, while other took a detour enjoying close views of a Helmeted Manakin and a Saffron-billed Sparrow.

October 1

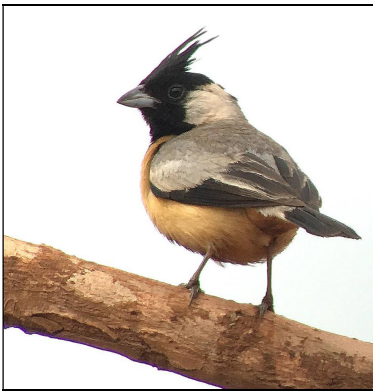
We had only a few hours before having to go back to Cuiaba for our flight, so we decided to give another chance to the Aguas Frias road. We went and birded several different sections of the road finding all the usual (but endemic!) suspects plus an Aplomado Falcon couple. We were almost back at the van, when Richard and I got a glimpse of a hummer flyby that was very white... everyone gathered together again, and we searched in vain for a Horned Sungem for some minutes. We got back in the van but before leaving, Eduardo and I did some fine-tuned time accounting and we figured out we still had some 30 minutes available before going to hotel if we were all quick and packed to move, as it was the case, so we decided to spend more time onsite. We went back to the hummingbird area, and soon we were enjoying not 1 or 2, but 3 Horned Sungems at close range chasing each other, feeding, hanging out! We got

great views, great photos and indeed confirmed that persistence pays ;-)) Returning to Cuiaba, we did a stop at the Bride's Veil Waterfall for amazing scenery and a couple of photos, and went back to airport for our flights back home.

This was an amazing trip! We nailed down 405 species of birds having great views of most of them and this time we mixed some great Amazonian species with the Cerrado and Pantanal ones making it even more exciting and providing a wider array of lifers for everyone. We did very well with big mammals and other interesting creatures as well.

Have to thank all our local guides and boat/van drivers, as well as all our clients for making this such a successful trip! ... Already looking forward to come back for more Pantanal.

Diego Calderon, Sunrise Birding LLC



Photos: Coal-crested Finch, Helmeted Manakin (Dave Curtis), Black-girdled Barbet (Eduardo Patrial), Group at Transpantaneira