



BRAZIL JAGUAR TOUR - 2015

NORTHERN PANTANAL WITH EXTENSION TO EMAS NATIONAL PARK

12th – 24th OCTOBER

Trip Report by Regina Ribeiro

ITINERARY IN BRIEF:

- 12 October** – Arrival in Cuiaba. Transfer to Pixaim River area, Pantanal. Night spotting.
- 13 October** – Morning boat excursion at Pixiam. Afternoon transfer to Porto Jofre Hotel. Night spotting.
- 14 October** – Full day boat ride for jaguars and other wildlife at Cuiaba River and its tributaries. Night spotting.
- 15 October** - Full day boat ride for jaguars and other wildlife at Cuiaba River and its tributaries. Night spotting.
- 16 October** – Transfer to Jaguar Ecological Reserve (JER). Afternoon drive in the surroundings. Night spotting.
- 17 October** – Early morning drive and transfer to Araras lodge. Afternoon exploration by truck. Evening walk around the lodge and night spotting.
- 18 October** – Araras lodge, morning walk and drive. Afternoon walk to the monkey tower. Night spotting.
- 19 October** - Araras lodge, morning walk and drive. Afternoon drive and canoe ride at Sentinela. Night spotting.
- 20 October** – Araras lodge, optional morning walk and spare time. Transfer to Cuiaba airport. Fly to Campo Grande for the extension.
- 21 October** – Morning transfer from Campo Grande to Emas NP. Lunch at Chapadao do Ceu town and transfer to the lodge, Pousada do Gloria. Afternoon drive exploration in the surroundings. Night spotting.
- 22 October** – Early drive into the park and walk along Rio Formoso. Afternoon drive inside/outside of the park. Night spotting.
- 23 October** – Morning and afternoon drive inside/outside of park. Night spotting.
- 24 October** – Early transfer to Campo Grande airport. Fly home. End of tour.



Female Jaguar, Rio Cuiaba by Tony Gray

The Pantanal is considered an important area for the conservation of jaguars *Panthera onca* in the long-term. According to a recent study, the original vegetation cover remains intact in 85% of the Pantanal plain. However, in the uplands of the Upper Paraguay watershed over 50% of the original vegetation has been altered. This situation is worrisome as this area harbors the headwaters of the rivers that are responsible for maintaining the wet and dry cycles of the Pantanal. Habitat fragmentation caused by human presence and intensification of land use is a threat to jaguars in the Pantanal. Other threats include high levels of retaliation from ranchers due to livestock depredation and lack of enforcement by wildlife authorities, illegal hunting, tourism activity, pasture management through the use of annual fires, and the mining industry. As opposed to previously reported, only about 63% of the Pantanal biome is actually occupied by jaguars. The first estimate of a jaguar population in Brazil was conducted in the southern pantanal (6,5-7,0 jaguars/km²), although the distribution of the species is heterogeneous, which precludes an accurate estimation of the current population size in this biome (CATnews Special Issue 7, Spring 2012: The status of the jaguar in the Pantanal)

DAYS 1 & 2 (October 12 to 13) - PANTANAL, PIXAIM RIVER

The 13-day trip of WildWings Jaguar Tour in the Northern Pantanal, the world's largest wetland with extension to Emas National Park, an important area of savanna woodland was once more celebrated successfully with spectacular Jaguars sightings along with a great selection of species that includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and butterflies amongst others.

Our trip started in Cuiaba, the gateway of the Pantanal, with a group of six clients and the Rio Pixaim area would be our destination for the first night. After lunch and a short stop in a local supermarket, we headed south towards Pocone, the last town before entering the transpantaneira gravel road reaching the entrance of the Pantanal in good time.

From this point, the richness of the area starts to appear and several stops were made to see and photograph concentrations of caimans and specially wading birds and birds of prey along the road. The species seen on the first run of the transpantaneira included a small colony of Proboscis bats under a bridge, birds like Greater Rheas, Red-legged Seriema, Jabiru and Woodstorks, Great and Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Heron, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Cocoi Heron, Large-billed Tern, Roseate Spoonbill, Limpkin, Snail Kite, Black-collared Hawk together with many others. More further stops, done on the way to watch a family of the largest world's rodent, Capybaras plus Marsh Deer, Azara's Agouti, Crab-eating Fox and finally arriving in our hotel at 6:00 pm.



Concentration of caimans

Although most of the group were tired from their long journey, a post dinner drive in open truck was promptly accepted, as this would be our only night in this area. In the last days, a sudden drop in temperature had slowed down the animal's activities. However, we were able to see two species of deer, the Red and Gray Brocket, a nice view of Brazilian Tapir, a pair of Crab-eating Foxes and a few Pauraques, a medium-sized nightjar.



Giant Otters, Rio Pixaim

The following day a pre-breakfast boat ride was arranged primarily aiming to look for the endangered Giant Otters. The Rio Pixaim atmosphere is quite pleasant and shortly after boarding, an array of wildlife waking up was seen. We reached the otter's burrow just in time to watch a family of eight individuals with youngsters, swimming around, playing and investigating our boat before disappearing upriver.



Parrot Snake



Green Iguana

Heading back to our hotel, we made stops in various points to look and photograph Green Iguanas, caimans, capybaras and birds like Bare-faced Curassow, Blue-throated Piping-guan, Chaco Chachalaca, Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, Turquoise-fronted Parrot, Sungrebe, Anhinga, Roadside Hawk, Toco Toucan, White-winged Swallow, Solitary Black Cacique amongst others. After a two hour-boat exploration we were ready for breakfast and just arriving got distracted at the restaurant verandah watching a beautiful Parrot Snake climbing from a plant pot into the roof.

The Mato Grosso Pantanal Hotel is nicely located and it's surroundings have plenty of things to see. Birds in the hotel feeders include Yellow-billed and Crested Cardinals, Bay-winged and Shiny Cowbirds, Giant Cowbird, Saffron Finch, Palm and Silver-beaked Tanagers and Grayish Saltator. Around 9:30am, we headed towards the trail by the river to look for more wildlife in particular the Black-tailed Marmoset. The morning temperature warmed up quickly and the forest was remarkably quiet. Marmosets were not around but got good views of Golden Tegu lizards, a group of Black-and-gold Howlers and birds seen included the striking Helmeted Manakin, Pygmy and Green-and-rufous Kingfishers, Black-fronted

Nunbird, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, White-lored and Rusty-backed Spinetails, Mato Grosso Antbird, and Flavescent Warbler.



Roadside Hawk



Amazon Kingfisher

DAYS 2 TO 4 (October 13 to 15) - PANTANAL, PORTO JOFRE

Our van was loaded and we set off to leave at 1:30 pm to Porto Jofre where we would spend the next three nights. Due to intense heat and dust, this part of the trip was done in air-conditioned vehicle until an area known as Campo do Jofre, the largest sequence of flooded fields along the transpantaneira road and an excellent place to look for an enormous variety of animals. The species observed along the way included a male Marsh Deer, Neotropical River Otter dashing across the road, several groups of Capybaras, loads of caimans and numerous birds such as Southern Screamer, Plumbeous and Green Ibis, Great Black Hawk, Jabiru and Wood Storks, Monk and Peach-fronted Parakeets, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Piratic Flycatcher as well as, kingfishers, terns, kingbirds and swallows. Arrival at 6:00 pm in our comfortable Hotel Porto Jofre, we had dinner and left for a night spotlighting along the road and airfield. After a quiet drive, we were thrilled to spot a Gray-four Eyed Opossum, not common, a distant but good view of an Ocelot and a large tarantula.

The two full days of boat rides at Jofre would be dedicated to search for Jaguars, our main target. This species is strongly associated with the presence of water and in recent years, Porto Jofre has been considered the best place to see Jaguars in the entire American Continent. In all these years of running the Jaguar Tour, we had never missed it but nothing is never guaranteed and there are many expectations involved.

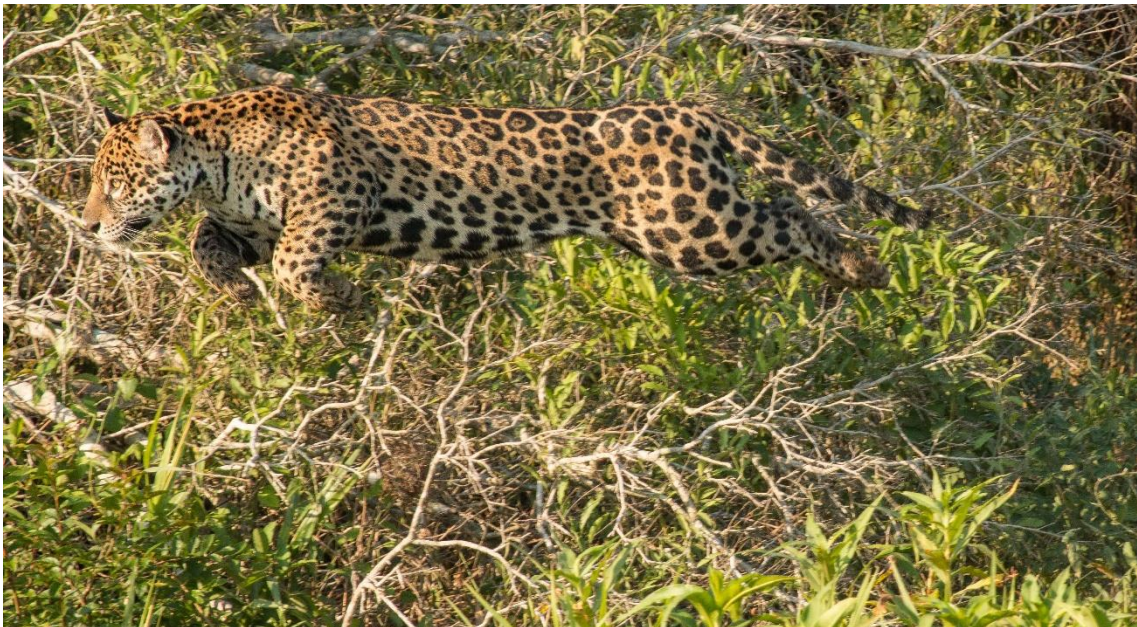
At 6:00 am, we boarded on our speedboat heading upstream on the Rio Cuiaba and its tributaries where most of jaguar sightings occur. The birdlife along the river was plentiful and stops were done to watch them closely when one of the boats announced a Jaguar near the hotel, almost in our start point!



Jaguar stalking a capybara, Rio Cuiaba. By Tony Gray

We made a quick turn and got to the place in time to witness the most fantastic sighting of a Jaguar stalking a Capybara in the water hyacinths. Unexpected, the Jaguar throw himself into the air, jumped from the bank about three meters in length straight into the water but missed the prey. Although the attempt was not successful, the view of the flying jaguar was unforgettable! We were still be able to follow it moving along the riverbank until disappearing in the vegetation.

Capybaras and caimans are the main preys of the jaguars along the rivers.



The hunting attempt to catch a capybara in the water, Rio Cuiaba. By Daniel Brunton



Walking away before disappearing into the vegetation. By Tony Gray

We moved towards Rio Piquiri and were entertained by a family of Giant Otters catching fish, playing, rolling in the sand, communicating with high-pitched sounds and a troop of Black-striped Capuchins feeding in close range but difficult to follow behind branches.



Giant Otters usually live in groups, rarely solitary, consisting of an adult pair and their offspring and feeds primarily on fish although kill and eat other vertebrates such as snakes and small caimans.

Continued our journey to Corixo Negro, a temporary channel as the water remains after the dry season, a good place for Jaguars and other wildlife. Shortly after 8:30 am, the radio reported the second cat at Rio Três Irmãos, which luckily was nearby. The place was filling up fast with boats trying to get the best position and doubtless requiring a good ability from the boatman to maneuver against strong current without damaging other people's view. The Jaguar seemed sleepy but kept alert with the movement around until suddenly standing up and walking along the bank and dropping out of sight.

This male, has been observed at Rio Três Irmãos and vicinities since 2011, and it is well known to be a sharp hunter and easily recognized by it's right messed up eye.



By Regina Ribeiro

Jaguars have the strongest bite among all cats due to the arrangement of its jaw muscles.



By Tony Gray

It did not take long for another radio announcement giving a new location for a jaguar at Rio Cuiaba near where we were. It was only 9:30 am. This one was a female moving along the riverbank through thick vegetation. At the beginning, we had glimpses but finally, managed to get super views of her coming down into the water, swimming and walking over falling tree trunks. This lasted over an hour of excitement with superb chances to watch behavior and photograph.



By Regina Ribeiro



By Ewan Davies

Time went fast and suddenly we realized the intensity of the heat and decided to go back to the hotel. It is worth it to mention that the lodge's surrounds provides numerous opportunities to find a good number of species that includes, the iconic Hyacinth Macaw, White Eyed and Yellow Chevroned Parakeets, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Toco Toucan as well as Southern Screamer, Wood Stork, Wattled Jacana, waders like Pied and Collared Plover and Solitary Sandpiper by the water lilies pond.

Before leaving for the afternoon boat session, a porcupine was spotted moving along tree branches by the hotel reception but quickly turning almost invisible. At least 10 people were searching until finally, it was located lower in the tree and sleeping in a fork above palm leaves. Unfortunately, he kept his face hidden and eventually showing a bit of his pink nose.

For our afternoon excursion, we headed out to Rio Piquiri. The pleasant ride along the river produced a good number of Capybaras and some interesting Giant Otter behavior that seemed to have offspring inside their burrow and a Great Potoo, mimicking a tree trunk, in its day perch. At dusk, it was interesting to watch, flocks of Band tailed Nighthawks followed by hundreds of fishing bats leaving their roosts and hawking over the water by sunset. The after dinner short spotlighting session was again, slow with a few Pauraques, a Great Horned Owl and some unidentified frogs.



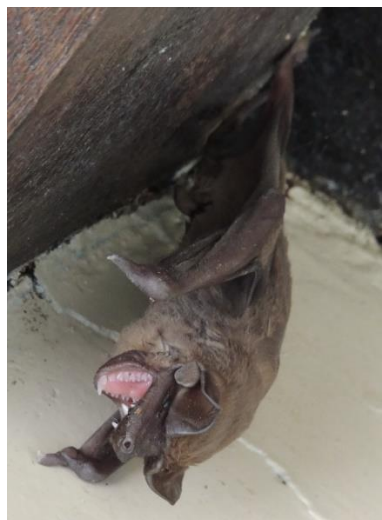
Capybara, the world's largest rodent



Black-and-gold Howler Monkey

For day two here, another early departure heading out to favored Jaguar areas at Rio Três Irmãos. The pressure was off, the group was relaxed to enjoy whatever we could find although inspired to find more cats. A lot of distance were covered this morning with enjoyable views of howler monkey troops, iguanas, caimans, capybaras, a variety of shore birds in the sandbanks such as Black Skimmers, Yellow and Large-billed Terns together with an array of others. Since our successful morning yesterday, boats were struggling to find the spotted cat.

Before leaving to our afternoon excursion, a single Palla's Mastiff Bat was found by John hanging in the roof tiles outside of his room.



Palla's Mastiff Bat



Proboscis Bat

No reports of Jaguars upriver since yesterday and my suggestion was to try downstream at Rio Negrinhos, another promising site and away from the boat's crowd. Although failed to find more cats there, we certainly enjoy the quietness of this beautiful river, had best views of a Sunbittern, a rockery of Cattle Egrets, two groups of howler monkeys in close range, a Proboscis Bat colony and followed a family of Giant Otters heading home for the night and getting into their burrow in a bank below tree roots. It had been a nice afternoon that ended with a stunning sunset on the way back to the hotel. Today was our last boat excursion at Jofre area and we felt lucky and happy to have found Jaguars in our first morning with such special encounters.



Cocoi Heron

Rufescent-Tiger Heron

DAYS 5 TO 6 (October 16 to 17) - PANTANAL, JAGUAR ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

The Jaguar Ecological Reserve, 35 km north of Jofre, was our next destination for one night. We left Jofre around 6:45 am to be there as early as possible. The temperature was still pleasant when we crossed Campo do Jofre area early enough to see countless birds in the remaining pools and trees, and got entertained watching a mixed flock feeding on the ground that included the bright colored Orange-backed Troupial, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Cattle Tyrant, and others flying around like the Common Tody-Flycatcher and Black-backed Water Tyrant. At this stop, unfortunately, we saw a dead anaconda, probably killed by car. During our journey to JER, a skittish Black-tailed Marmoset ran across the road but did not come back into view.

We made a quick stop in our rooms at the lodge and once again boarded in the open truck towards Santa Isabel road, a place that has produced in past tours many interesting things. The first try was the abandoned research station where we found a colony of Seba's Short-tailed Bat then drove to the end of this path but it was very hot and unproductive. The afternoon, night and morning drive sessions in the area, at this time, has produced very little. In the evening, a pair of Crab-eating Foxes whilst spotlighting and in the following morning a Tapir crossing the road a few meters from the lodge around 5:00 am and an Azara's Agouti. A camera trap, set near our accommodations, got an Ocelot at 4:50 am. The area was extremely dry with no remaining ponds along Santa Isabel road, which I think explained so little activity. However, birdlife was excellent with views of Blue-fronted Parrot, Red-shouldered Macaw, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Blue-ground Dove, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Buff-breasted Wren as well as great sightings of a Jabiru's nest with chicks and the beautiful Hyacinth Macaws by our rooms.



At JER, Ocelot by camera trap

DAYS 6 TO 9 (October 17th to 20th) - PANTANAL, ARARAS LODGE

This morning we started the last leg of our journey, returning north along the transpantaneira to Araras Lodge for three nights. Departure was after our pre-breakfast excursion and plans were to be there for lunch. The run between JER and Pixaim was quiet and hot. A stop at Mato Grosso hotel for a short break provided a chance to see a roost of Tent-making Bats in the verandah and check the bird feeders. So our short stop became a longer one and time was running fast. We continued on our way seeing no less than eight Marsh Deer on route amongst males, females and a young. Arrival at Araras in time for lunch.



Tent Making Bat



Marsh Deer

We checked into our cozy rooms with some free time until the heat reached comfortable levels for the afternoon drive. Located about 27 km from the Pantanal entrance, Araras Lodge has an interesting location with a variety of habitats and providing good chances to find a diversity of species. At 3:30 pm aboard on the truck, we took the track opposite the lodge into their property and quick found a solitary South American Coati and distant Black-and-gold Howler Monkeys. Then we took a side road looking for armadillos and found Greater Rheas and a perch of Great Potoo, at much closer range.



Great Potoo, in it's day perch mimicking a tree trunk.

Continuing our exploration around the ranch, a Yellow Armadillo was seen by Daniel and disappeared before the whole group saw it. Sooner a second crossed in front of our truck rushing towards the forest edge digging for food. In addition, there, a herd of seven Collared Peccaries got spooked by the truck. Late afternoon, at Passo da Ema, the lodge's ranch, watched flocks of parrots and other birds coming back home, as well as capybaras and caimans gathering around the drying ponds.



Yellow Armadillo

Dinner was served at 7:30 pm and after that we went for a walk exploration. Shortly seen a roost of Lesser Fishing Bats in the fig tree, then Greater Fishing Bats catching insects around the light post, the Great Horned Owl perched in the TV antenna and along the short boardwalk by our rooms checked for a Tapir that is often observed there. Left afterwards, by truck and the night drive proved to be awesome.

Just a few meters from the lodge along the main path, one of the most wanted animals, a Giant Anteater. We had prolonged views of this one and watched it feeding and excavating the soil looking for its prey. Anteaters are specialized feeders that eat mainly ants, termites and bees using powerful front claws to dig the ground or open up nests of their prey, which are trapped with its long sticky tongue. Continuing north on the transpantaneira other nocturnal animals were found such as Crab-eating Fox, a Crab-eating Raccoon and a beautiful Ocelot hunting in the water hyacinths, that although for a short time, the view was excellent. Drove a bit further and with the light I got a Tapir just getting into the vegetation and a hidden Common Potoo. Moving towards the track opposite the lodge had views of two Southern Tamandua walking on the ground; one quick disappeared behind a tree the other seen close by the road, one Brazilian Rabbit and more foxes and raccoons.

Giant anteaters are mostly terrestrial and generally solitary.



Photos Tony Gray



The Southern Tamandua is arboreal, have prehensile tail that acts like a fifth paw and can be seen foraging on the ground as well.

The following morning at sunrise, another Southern Tamandua was seen by Ewan walking into the woods on the boardwalk by our accommodations. After breakfast we went for a walk along the Tuiuiu tower trail and seen a solitary male Coati, a few agoutis and colorful birds such as Blue-crowned Motmot, Blue-crowned Trogon, Dull-capped Attila, and up in the tower a Jabiru nest with chicks.

We climbed into our truck, went for a drive at Mata do Carvoeiro, a path of deciduous forest, and got a view of two lizard's species, Amazon Racerunner and the Golden Tegu.



Mata do Carvoeiro deciduous forest

The midday break is always welcome and strolling around the lodge is a good way to find birds in special the Hyacinth Macaws by its nest, caimans, capybaras and even monkeys like capuchins.



Toco Toucan

Chestnut-eared Aracari



Hyacinth Macaw



South American Coati

In the afternoon we walked down the boardwalk to the monkey tower. This walk produced a few agoutis and for those who climbed the tower, distant views of Marsh Deer, Roseate Spoonbill, herons, egrets and close views of Chestnut-eared Aracaris that responded to the playback. Activity was slow and we returned to the lodge and walked along the trail that goes to Bararas, and seen there a coati climbing a tree and heard Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl followed by other birds.



Flooded land view from the monkey tower, Araras

In the evening, we drove South on the transpantaneira as I noticed some areas filled with water from the last rains. There we found a Tapir drinking water and running away when heard the vehicle, a few foxes, three Red-brocket and two Gray-brocket deer.

The next morning would be devoted to look for monkeys in special the Black-tailed Marmosets. Following the suggestion of local guides, I picked a trail with good chances to find them. On the way seen tracks of a small cat as well as Puma tracks, a fresh armadillo burrow and more agoutis. Almost ending the track, a herd of Collared Peccaries running away and a troop of Black-striped Capuchins appeared and performed well for us.



Black-striped Capuchin



Greater Rhea with chicks

Back to the lodge, for the ones who wanted to continue, we went back towards the boardwalk, I heard marmosets calling above our heads, and luckily two of them were on the tree branches allowing us some good views. Our last afternoon drive session was a leisure ride down the river, Sentinela, in kayaks with chances to encounter the resident wildlife which include the pretty Agami Heron, and Tapir at daytime. The Sentinela is a peaceful place with plenty of things to look for. During our ride, countless birds, including Golden-collared Macaws, Gray-necked Woodrails, Sungrebe, and the beautiful hummingbird, Fork-tailed Woodnymph. From the kayak, we heard something running into the forest, which sounded like a tapir. We finish our ride with no more surprises but surely, it was a delightful experience. On the way, a Red-footed Tortoise was observed just about to disappear into the forest.



Red-footed tortoise

Tonight would be our last dinner as a group since Tony and Kathy were leaving to Iguacu Falls and did not join us for the extension. It had been a great group and I thank everyone for all their help finding animals, spotlighting and sharing photos!

With two people that came for the night, we have driven only a couple of hundred meters when my lamp illuminated an Ocelot beside a roadside pool near the road. The cat seemed relaxed with our presence and let us watch it without moving away. Continuing further down along the transpantaneira more raccoons and foxes were found, then on the return the Ocelot was still sitting by the same pool. We were thrilled with such wonderful sightings of this graceful cat and indeed was a good way to finish our last night in the Pantanal.



Ocelot by Daniel Brunton

Next morning we were leaving at 9:30 am, and had some spare time to wander around for more photos. Ewan that went to pick up his camera trap set by the armadillo burrow came across with a Giant Anteater. We went there to check out but could not find it again. Left to Cuiaba, had lunch and checked-in to our flights to Campo Grande and Iguacu Falls. Arrival in Campo Grande early evening.



Paraguayan Caiman at Araras lodge. By Daniel Brunton



Group team: Ewan, John, Regina, Marian, Kathy, Daniel and Tony

TOUR EXTENSION – EMAS NATIONAL PARK

Emas National Park lies in the northeastern edge of the Pantanal within the Cerrado Biome, the oldest tropical savannah on earth. Its 132.000 hectares of protected area is a mosaic of landscapes mainly composed by grasslands, scrubs, marshes and narrow stripes of gallery forest. The park is home for a great diversity of flora and fauna species and it is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

DAYS 10 TO 13 (October 21 to 24) - EMAS NP, POUSADA DO GLÓRIA

Early departure from Campo Grande, driving 339km, northeast, to Chapadao do Ceu, the nearest town to Emas NP. Our journey took 6 hours (the clock moves one hour ahead) arriving for lunch and heading out to our lodge afterwards. Located on the border of the NP, 38 km from town, Pousada do Gloria is a nice place to stay since it provides good opportunities do find wildlife. Its rustic style offers comfortable accommodations, pleasant atmosphere and good food. A few stops on the way to watch a Yellow Armadillo crossing in front of the car, Pampas Deer with fawn and birds like Greater Rheas, Plush-crested Jays, Aplomado Falcon, Burrowing Owls and the colorful Blue-and-yellow Macaws.



Blue-and-yellow Macaws

At 4:00 pm, we checked into our rooms and left again later in the day to search the area. Shortly after leaving the lodge, we found a Neotropical Rattle Snake, Azara's Agouti, and a herd of at least 50 White-lipped Peccaries running from the fields into the forest. The Maned Wolf would be one of our targets here and the lodge's vicinity is its favored area. A storm was approaching quick and we returned. Dinner was served and we waited until it stopped raining. Around 9:00 pm, we left for a drive with low expectations due to weather. Just a couple of hundred meters a Tapir was spotted sitting in the field with great views when it slowly started to move closer to our vehicle and further down alongside the main road a single Crab-eating Raccoon was seen running away. After crossing the Bandeira gate into the park we saw a pair of bright eyes hiding behind the bushes, which turned out to be a Hoary Fox, an endemic species to the Brazilian savannah, then two more Tapirs, possibly a pair, and last the rare White-winged

Nightjar, a threatened species. It was nearly 11:00 pm and we finished our 2-hour drive that turned out to be successful.



Juvenile Brazilian Tapir by Daniel Brunton

At the end of the dry season, the first storms come down with a lot of lightning causing uncontrolled fires and burning huge areas that becomes a major threat to the parks and consequently to the wildlife. For a few days, before our arrival, the rangers were working in the upper park to keep the fires down and fortunately, the heavy shower of yesterday afternoon helped extinguish it.



Recent burned fields, Emas National Park

An earlier breakfast was arranged and afterwards we drove to the park grasslands towards the recent burned areas as our local guide, Ana suggested that these could be good places to find carnivorous searching for dead animals. We covered a long way until starting to see the burned fields but no mammals

were found although we saw fresh wolf tracks and a variety of birds feeding on the ground, which included Crested Caracara, White-tailed Hawk, Red-winged Tinamou and even a small flock of Blue-and-Yellow Macaws. While driving along the grassland landscape, we also noticed countless termite mounds infested with swarms of flying termites attracting flocks of birds like White-rumped Swallow and Fork-tailed Flycatcher feeding in the air. According to studies, the swarming flights of termites are seasonal and timed with the rains probably due to better humidity conditions to build new colonies. It was quite remarkable to watch such interactions along with the environment dynamics.



The swarming of flying termites attracts birds as well as curious visitors!

Burrowing Owl nesting in the termite mound.

Some birds of campo-cerrado including a few specialties were observed; Collared Crescent-chest, Cock-tailed Tyrant, Shrike-like Tanager, White-rumped Tanager, Black-masked Finch, Gray Monjita, Grassland Sparrow and Burrowing Owl. Also, seen along these fields, the Black-and-white Tegu lizard by its hole. On the way back, we went for a short walk along the Rio Formoso gallery forest looking for Green Anaconda that can be found along the riverbank but nothing was there. It had warmed up tremendously by the time we started heading back to the lodge.



Cock-tailed Tyrant

During our afternoon break, a herd of White-lipped Peccaries established by males, females and youngsters showed up by the lodge's buildings. As we approached to watch them closely, they got alarmed, barking and clicking teeth, running back into the wood, raising their hair and staring at us but as we maintained some distance, they just kept moving away without any more threats.



White-lipped Peccaries



Common Long-tongued Bat



Typical Cerrado flower



Snouted Tree frog by Ewan Davies

We left the lodge to the park headquarters to meet our open pickup truck for the afternoon drive. As getting ready to go a roost of Common Long-tongued bat was found and a Pampas deer fawn who had lost his mother and was been taking care by the park staff was present by our vehicle.



Pampas Deer

The main goals on this drive was to look for the wolf as well as any other species we have not seen so far and that included Giant Anteaters during daytime. We turned into a side road that goes to Sucuriu Farm where in previous trips I have seen anteater in the marshes and we were not disappointed, as two beautiful individuals were found not distant from each other.



Giant Anteaters are edentate animals, having no teeth, small eyes and ears, a long tongue and great sense of smell.
By Regina Ribeiro



By Daniel Brunton

A storm seemed to be on the way and we left the area following the farm roads where a muddy Yellow Armadillo was trotting in the field. The rain caught us and luckily for a short time. From the truck, we watched a stunning sequence of lightning until reaching the Bandeira gate where we stopped to eat our snacks. Our night drive produced views of another Tapir, a pair of Crab-eating Foxes but nothing else. For tonight, plans included a return to the burned fields to search for carnivores and to see the bioluminescence but the uncertain weather and the drop in temperature changed our plans. The bioluminescence can be seen in the park, at the beginning of the rainy season and more intense during

the months of September-October. The phenomenon occurs when a female of a click beetle species (*Pyrearinus termitilluminans*) lay its eggs in the termite's cavities and as the young hatch, the larvae glow with a green light bright enough to attract the emerging flying termites to eat them. The humidity and warmer temperature combined with a darker night is the ideal conditions to observe the nocturnal glowing termite mounds resembling city lights. Although we did not see the series of glowing mounds, we did see some of them illuminated which was unique.

The following morning was cloudy and cold when we left by truck for an exploration into a farmland area. The usual species seen included Yellow Armadillo, Pampas Deer, and a new one, the Striped Hog-nosed Skunk, found on the edge of a sugar cane plantation. Nearly at 7:00 am, by the sugar cane field, we heard a Capybara bark; a behavior that happens when they feel threatened by a predator. Hoping to get a view of a cat, we waited for a while but as nothing appeared, we moved away. The birdlife was spectacular, flocks of macaws, parrots, parakeets, toucan, Yellow-rumped Marshbird and Streamer-tailed Tyrants. Searching the areas inside the park, we saw fresh tracks of wolf and not far from the park entrance found a fantastic looking lizard feeding on blackberries by the ranger's house. I noticed a different face coloration and later got its correct identification, Duseni's Tegu lizard, an endemic to the Cerrado biome and the first record for WildWings tours. At Emas NP, two species of Tegu lizards occurs, this one and the Black-and-white, which we have also seen.

Tegu lizards, family Teiidae, are widely distributed throughout South America.



Duseni's Tegu Lizard by John Fynn

Late morning, returning to the lodge, we stopped to observe a Yellow Armadillo digging a hole and fast disappearing inside while we could still hear him excavating and breathing.



Yellow Armadillo

By lunchtime, the rain came down much stronger. The truck was supposed to wait for us by the park headquarters at 5:00 pm. When the rain finally stopped it almost time. We took a short cut inside the park and after a 30-minute drive dancing in the mud, we got there. Explored again some of the marshes, farmlands, and coming back to the park found another skunk , then checked the wolf track trail and not far from there got a brief but nicer view of the Hoary Fox. The park ranger mentioned it had puppies but we did not get to see

them. It had warmed up tonight and more luminescent termites were observed. Returning to our accommodations, a Tapir crossing from the park to the fields and later more peccaries running into the woods. We finish our night earlier as tomorrow we would have a long drive back to Campo Grande.

Left at 6:00 am watching flocks of parrots, macaws, jays and countless seedeaters. On our way to airport, the last views of a Giant Anteater by a busy highway and a South American Coati on the edge of a Reserve in Campo Grande. Our last wildlife encounters before the end of the trip! Arrival at airport in good time to have a farewell lunch.

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