



TRIP REPORT
BRAZIL: PANTANAL & CHAPADA DOS GUIMARÃES
9 – 23 August 2022

August 9th: The group arrives in São Paulo. Most of our flights were early morning arrivals so we arranged for a day of birding with Allan Porto who is a great local guide. The first stop was Tiete Ecological Park followed by Cantareira State Park. The day was overcast and a bit rainy, but the birds were still active and we found over 50 species with many nice Atlantic Forest birds that we would not have chances for any other time on this tour. Some of the birds seen included Dusky-legged Guan, Violet-capped Woodnymph, Green Ibis, Spot-backed and Variable Antshrikes, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird, Rufous Gnateater, Pallid and Rufous-capped Spinetail, Swallow-tailed Manakin, White-necked, Rufous-bellied and Creamy-bellied Thrushes, Golden-winged Cacique, Golden-crowned and White-browed Warblers, Black-goggled, Fawn-breasted, Burnished-buff, Brassy-breasted, Green-headed, Sayaca, Golden-chevroned and Ruby-crowned Tanagers, Blue Dacnis and Green-winged Saltator.



Blue-naped Chlorophonia



Brassy-breasted Tanager

August 10th: This morning we jumped on a domestic flight from São Paulo to Campo Grande which is the modern capital of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. In Campo Grande we were met by our excellent local guide Alyson Vieira de Melo who would be guiding us for the rest of the tour. We also had a great driver and a comfortable air-conditioned van for the transfer to our first lodge, the Pousada Aguapé. After check-in at the lodge, we began birding the lodge property where we encountered the first Hyacinth Macaws of the trip, in addition we saw Toco Toucans, Nanday Parakeets, Chaco Chachalacas, Campo Flickers, Plush-crested Jays, White-naped Xenopsaris and Red-billed Scythebill to name a few.



Hyacinth Macaws



Toco Toucan

August 11th and 12th: We had two full days to explore the Pousada Aguapé property. Aguapé is a family-run lodge situated near the banks of the Aquidauana river. We explored the area on foot, by boat, and by open safari vehicles. During the safari trips we were able to observe the enigmatic Giant Anteater and families of Capybaras. We also saw gangs of the emu-like Greater Rhea and stately pairs of Red-legged Seriemas. Some of the target birds we were after in the Southern Pantanal/Aguapé, which are rare in the northern Pantanal, that we were happy to find included: Blue-and-yellow Macaw, Nanday and Blaze-winged Parakeets, Spot-backed Puffbird, Chestnut-capped Foliage-gleaner, and White-fronted Woodpecker, to name just a few.



Giant Anteater



Greater Rhea



Red-legged Seriema



Blue-and-yellow Macaw

August 13th: After another productive (68 species) morning of birding at Pousada Aguapé, we had lunch at the lodge and then drove back to Campo Grande in the afternoon birding along the way and found Southern Screamers and Plumbeous Ibis to add to our growing list.

August 14th: In the morning we flew to Cuiabá arriving in time for lunch in Cuiabá. We then transferred to the small town of Chapada dos Guimarães, approximately an hour to the north-east (65 km). This popular tourist destination is home to dramatic sandstone cliffs and fascinating rock formations, and perhaps most interesting to birders, the area is surrounded by significant patches of *cerrado* savannas and gallery forest habitats. We had this afternoon and a full day on the 15th to bird the Chapada dos Guimarães area.

August 15th: We had all day to bird around Chapada dos Guimarães and cover the area's *cerrado* savannas and gallery forests. The quiet roads through the low, scrubby *cerrado* were good for producing great looks at specialties birds including: White-banded and White-rumped Tanagers, White-eared Puffbird, Brown and Rufous-tailed Jacamars, Rufous-winged Antshrike and the recently described Chapada Flycatcher. As the morning heated up, we took our birding to the shady gallery forests to add Channel-billed Toucan, Band-tailed Manakin and Large-billed Antwren, plus many more. We also visited the famous Bridal Veil falls, Mato Grosso's best-known 'postcard' spot, an impressive 86-m waterfall. To make the 'post card' even better, we had multiple Red-and-green Macaws flying across the falls and Cliff Flycatchers nesting in the cliffs!



Red-and-green Macaws

August 16th: Early morning birding in Chapada dos Guimarães produced some new birds including Curl-crested Jay, Black-faced and Cinnamon Tanagers, Crested Black-Tyrant and the beautiful Blue Finch. After birding we then began the journey to the Pantanal. After passing Cuiabá the scrubby, rather arid brushland began to thin out as we descended gradually into the low-lying sedimentary depression where the Pantanal sits. As we reached the small town of Poconé, the paved road ended with a jarring suddenness: here we had reached the Transpantaneira, the dusty “highway” which strikes 150 kilometres into the northern Pantanal. As we bumped along we began to notice increasing amounts of egrets, herons, kingfishers and raptors alongside the road attending water-filled ditches and drying-out watering holes. Our first stop in the Northern Pantanal was the lovely Aymara Lodge which is certainly one of the top lodges in the Pantanal.



Blue Finch



August 17th: Aymara Lodge is located in a wooded area along a narrow river full of wildlife. Birds seen on the lodge grounds included Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Bare-faced Curassow, Chestnut-bellied Guan, White-throated and Red-throated Piping-Guan, Hyacinth Macaw, Sunbittern, Pale-crested Woodpecker, Great Rufous Woodcreeper, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Black-fronted Nunbird and many more. The forest trails on the lodge property were excellent also, producing Undulated Tinamou, Buff-bellied Hermit, Rusty-backed Antwren, Mato Grosso and Band-tailed Antbirds, White-lored Spinetail, Stripe-necked, Pearly-vented and Rusty-fronted Tody-Tyrants, Moustached Wren, Solitary Black and Yellow-rumped Caciques, Gray-headed Tanager, and Flavescent Warbler.



White-headed Marsh Tyrant.



Pale-crested Woodpecker



Band-tailed Antbird

August 18th: We had another full morning birding at Aymara, after lunch at the lodge we continued to head south down the Transpantaneira to the Pixaim river, where we stayed the night at the Hotel Mato Grosso. Birding was good on the hotel grounds with a super close up visit with the iconic Jabiru!

August 19th: Transpantaneira to Porto Jofre.

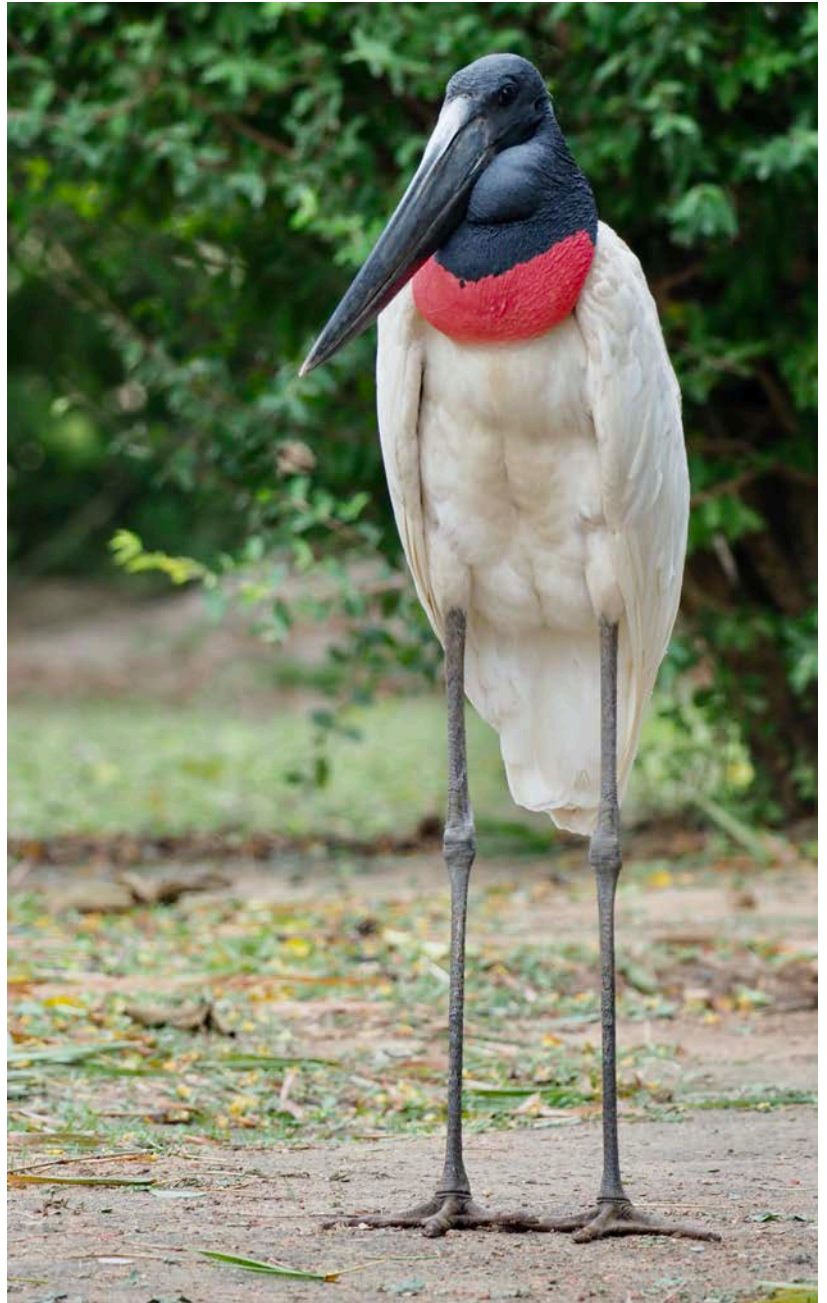
In the morning we met up at the dock for a boat trip on the Pixaim river. A boat trip here is always a highlight of any visit to the northern Pantanal. The slow-moving river is relatively narrow and absolutely jam-packed with birds and other wildlife. Highlights included all five South American kingfisher species, a parade of herons and egrets, remarkable views of Black-collared and Great Black Hawks, and both the unique Sunbittern and the lone South American representative of the finfoot family, the Sungrebe!



American Pygmy Kingfisher



Black-collared Hawk

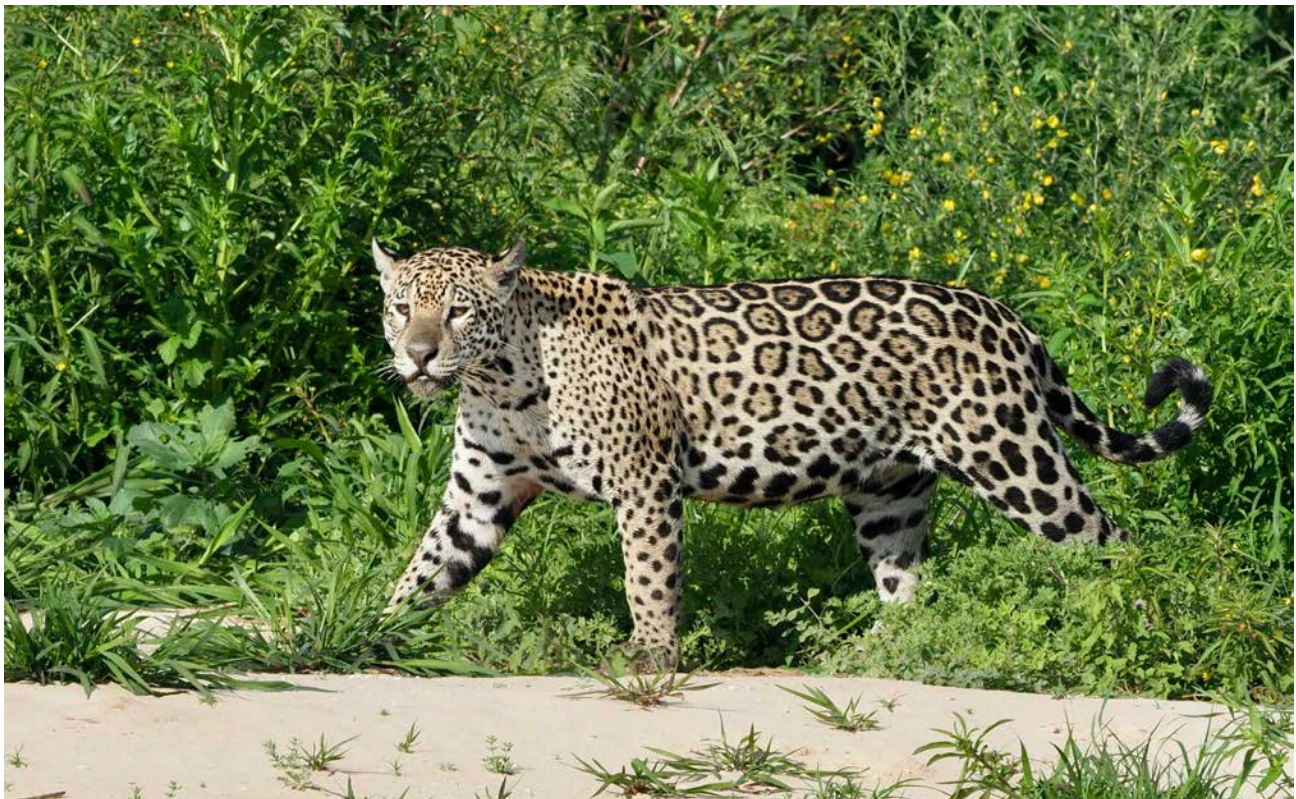


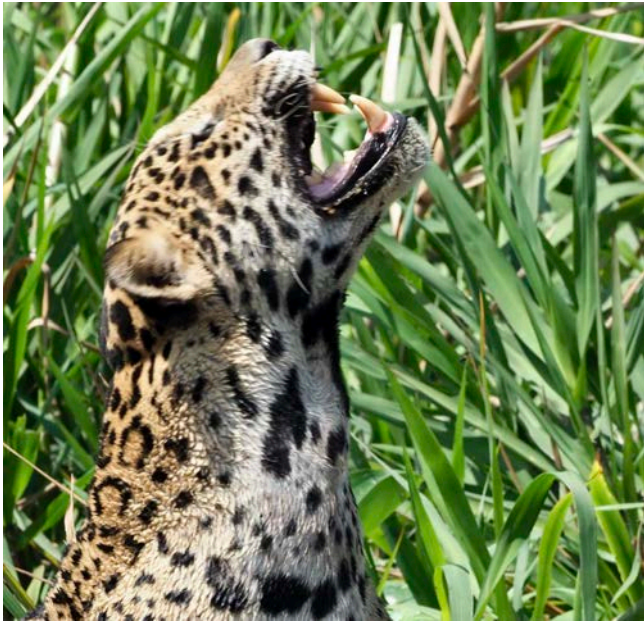
Jabiru

After lunch we departed the hotel and drove south down the Transpantaneira, working our way to the end of the road's end at the small fishing village of Porto Jofre on the bank of the Cuiabá River. We made opportunistic birding stops along the way and found Maguari Stork, Bare-faced Ibis, Boat-billed Heron, Southern Screamer, Savanna Hawk, and the gorgeous Scarlet-headed Blackbird. We also saw Marsh Deer, many dozens of Capybaras and hundreds of caimans. We reached Porto Jofre at the end of the afternoon and boarded our comfortable live-aboard yacht, the Jacaré, where we spent the next three nights.



August 20th & 21st: These days were dedicated to river trips on small open air boats to search for Jaguars! We had two full days of exploring the Cuiabá river and its tributaries. We found 7 Jaguars at various points along the banks of the river and had amazing close up views from our boat watching these amazing creatures. It was truly an incredible experience! They hunt for Capybaras and caiman along the river banks. The Encontro das Aguas State Park upstream from Porto Jofre is without a doubt the best location in the world to observe Jaguars in the wild.





Jaguars have the strongest jaws of all the big cats, their bite force is twice as strong as a tiger!

There was plenty else we saw during our time on the rivers, we encountered families of Giant Otters, Yacare Caiman, Golden-mantled Howler Monkeys and lots of birds! We had great looks at Capped Heron, Black-capped Donacobius, Orange Troupial, Blue-throated Piping-Guan, Jabiru, Roseate Spoonbill, Black-collared Hawk, Blue-crowned Trogon, Little Cuckoo, and much more.



Giant River Otter



Capped Heron



Last group dinner onboard the yacht, Jacaré

August 22nd: After breakfast we disembarked the Jacaré at Porto Jofre and boarded our van to make the return trip up the Transpantaneira. We had all day to bird our way back to Cuiabá where we overnighed in a comfortable hotel, ending the tour with a final farewell dinner.

August 23rd: The group will flew back together from Cuiabá to São Paulo, where we arrived in plenty of time to our make outbound international flights home.

It was a very successful tour where we saw 332 species of birds! We also saw so much other amazing wildlife, with the stars of the show being 7 Jaguars! All of the above wildlife photos were taken during the tour by Sherry Lane. We had a great group of fun birders and Alyson Vieira de Melo was an awesome bird/wildlife guide all of which made for a magnificent tour!

