

**HONEYGUIDE BRAZIL – Jaguars, Jabirus & other Jewels of Pantanal’s Wildlife**  
Unique itinerary with a full circle cruise in the Pantanal by Ecotours



# Honeyguide

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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## **PANTANAL BRAZIL TRIP REPORT - 22October-3November 2017**



The following is a detailed **Trip Report of the first Honeyguide Pantanal, Brazil tour** which was organized and led by Gabor and Andrea, owners of Ecotours & Kondor Ecolodge Ltd.

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. With the holiday's conservation contributions plus gift aid Honeyguide sent £300 to SAVE Brasil, the BirdLife partner in Brazil. This gives us a running total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide of £119,322 from 1991 to 2017.

We had 6 regular Honeyguiders on the tour (Maria Jose, Julia, Gill, Barbara, Jo and Mundi), joined by Flo and Everard to make it a perfectly sized group. Beside Gabor and Andrea we had several local guides to help find wildlife: Marcos at Transpantania, Max and Juliano on the boat and Ric amused everybody with his excellent photos during the whole tour.



Most of the tour companies spend a few days alongside the Transpantania road and pay a quick visit to the nearest, always busy Jaguar watching sites close to Porto Jofre, but almost nobody does a **full circle on the huge River system in the Southern Pantanal**. It is

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a magical journey out in the wilderness without encountering other groups or any settlements for a week, but surrounded by lush green forests, finding new birds, mammals, butterflies, amphibians and reptiles regularly. **All this on board of a luxury boat with panoramic restaurant, excellent food and relaxing caipirinha, this is surely one of the best dream holidays.**

**Brazil** and within that **the Pantanal** is surely a dream destination for any nature enthusiast. With our itinerary making a full circle on the rivers we visited the followings nature parks: **Parque Estadual Encontro da Aguas, Parque Nacional Mato Grosso & Reserva Ecologia Taiama.**



At the end of our last dinner Gabor asked everybody what was the best bird and mammal of the tour and also what was generally the best experience or highlight. No wonder that many of us replied without too much hesitation that the floating hotel and boat tour experience itself. Travel through huge protected areas full with wildlife, visiting side channels on smaller boats, but also the Transpantaneira road itself, especially driving through snowing clouds of butterflies for many miles - all were parts of a lifelong experience. Even well experienced travellers said this was their best ever wildlife tour! Regarding mammals out of the 19 species observed during the tour interestingly 3 species were almost equally mentioned as the best ones: Giant Otter, Giant Ant-eater and Jaguar, but the latter one ended on top of the list. We had almost 200 bird species during the tour, 190 seen by the group, 4 just heard and another 4 were seen just by guides. Regarding the best birds Mundi mentioned Orange-backed Troupial, Black-capped Donacobius and Toco Toucan. Barbara and Everard named Hyacinth Macaws and the fishing Striated Heron which were also bird observation highlight for Jo. Everard however added Parrots and Kingfishers as well. Julia, Ric and Flo was amazed by the nearby hunting Black Skimmer having its longer lower part of bill in the water skimming the surface of the water for food. Maria Jose loved the funny looking Boat-billed Heron, the strikingly coloured Scarlet-headed Blackbird and the strange Great Potoo. Gill added Rufescent Tiger Heron, the well camouflaged but up close Least Bittern and Pied Plover. Flo and Andi said that the Jabiru is so ugly that it stands out from the crowd by not just its size. :-)

**All pictures in this material were made during this tour by participants and leaders.**

#### **Fact File**

- 3nights in lodge rooms, 7nights/8days on the best floating hotel, 10 wildlife watching days in the world-famous Pantanal area, total 2 weeks with the overnight flights
- start and finish in Cuiaba, Brazil
- using one of the best Pantanal Lodges for 3nights with excellent on site bird- & wildlife-watching possibilities & a spacious floating hotel with panoramic restaurant & bar for 7 nights

#### **Highlights**

- **Jaguars, Giant River Otters, Giant Anteaters, Ocelot** & total 19 mammal species
- close to 200 bird species in good numbers including unique ones like **Hyacinth Macaw, Jabiru, Sunbitter, Orange-backed Troupial, all possible Kingfishers and many more**
- **the floating hotel and the boat tour through incredibly vast areas full with wildlife**

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- thousands of Caimans, **amazing landscape, days without roads & settlements**  
**wide variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and habitats**



### **Accommodation**

3 nights at Piuval Lodge & 7 nights on the floating hotel, 1 in Cuiaba

### **Activities and activity level, weather**

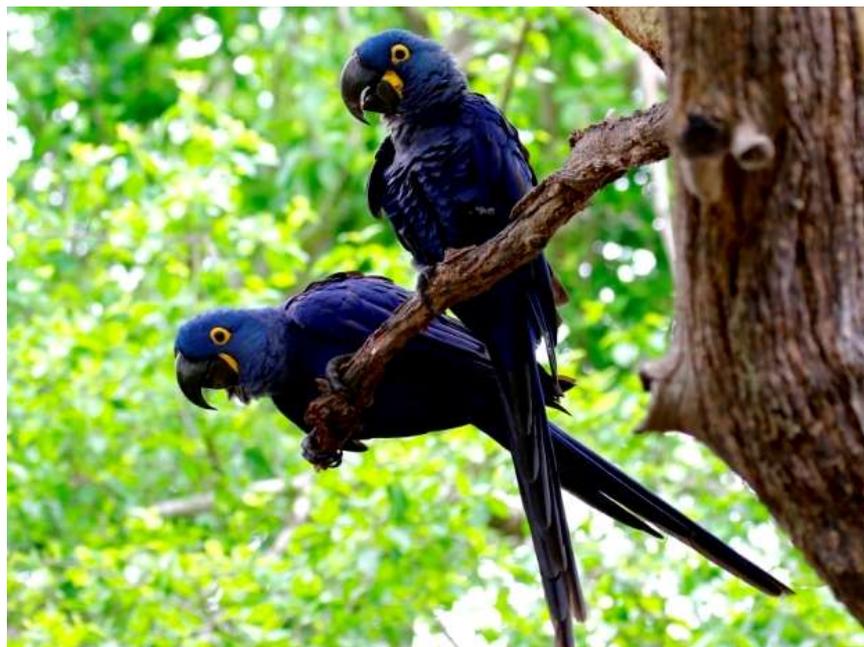
We had easy to moderate walks; sometimes it was hot and humid, however mornings and evenings were nice; we got heavy rain once or twice.

From the lodge we went out by 4x4 Trucks to discover the famous Transpantaneira road and once with small boats on a river and from the houseboat we went out daily on small motorboats to search wildlife in the morning & afternoons. This year horseflies were annoying especially at the first days on water, but as we were further in the jungle the problem eased.

### **Detailed day by day description of the tour and observations:**

#### **Day1 22 October 2017**

The tour started on the evening of 22 October 2017 in Cuiaba but everybody started the journey to Brasil much earlier. Most people coming from UK, but Andrea and Gabor were the first ones to arrive to Cuiaba from Hungary through Rome and São Paulo. They were faster than 1 of their luggage which unfortunately arrived just days later, broken and heavily searched, but at least nothing missed from it. Mundi arrived in a very different way from



Australia to Cuiaba where she was waited by Marcos who guided her on the way to and at the Piuval Lodge. Gabor and Andrea travelled back to the airport to greet the group in the evening and provide some sandwiches, drinks and snacks beside the arrival info. It was a bit more than one and a half hours to arrive to the hotel, checked in and discussed meeting for next day. Those who were not extremely tired could see Crab-eating Foxes, some Paraques and a pair of Great Horned Owls in the garden.

We went to sleep asap, since we had a long traveling day and we wanted to be well prepared for next day by being fresh as early as possible.

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## Day2 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2017

After the very long and tiresome journey from home till the lodge no wonder that just half of the group could start 5.30 in the morning. We started to see the first exciting birds such as **Yellow-chevroned and Monk Parakeets, Yellow-billed Cardinal, Palm Tanager, Sayaca Tanager, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Rufous Hornero, Shiny Cowbird, Saffron Finch, Rufous-bellied Thrush and Smooth-billed Ani**. The first raptors were represented by **Black Vultures and Southern Crested Caracaras**.



At 7 we had our first buffet style breakfast where you could choose from various cold and hot meals and drinks. Later from 8 o'clock we went out for our first safari ride on a transformed truck. However we started from a wooden platform it was still not easy to climb up on the metal ladders to reach one of the several rows of soft seats. But once we were sitting up there we could enjoy a panoramic view. We stopped several times when we could see something and indeed we could make a long list of various species such as **Orange-backed Troupial, Woodstork, Plumbeous Ibis, Coatimundi, Grey-necked Woodrail, Chaco Chachalaca, Sunbittern and Green-barred Woodpecker**.

The next very colorful species was **Blue-fronted Parrot and Chestnut-eared Aracari**. We had our first **Straight-billed Woodcreeper** on the tour and then we found several different mammals, such as **Aguti**, which looks like as a strange cross between a Hare and a Gopher; followed by a **Cavy or Brazilian Guineapig** and finally a **Black-tailed Marmoset**. More birds came thick and fast such as **Crested Oropendola, Chestnut-bellied Guan, Bare-faced Curassow, Whistling Heron, Black-fronted Nunbird, Chalk-browed Mockingbird and Pale-vented Pigeon**. **Smooth-billed Anis** were in small groups and we found **Short-crested Flycatcher, Grey-crested Cacholote and White-tipped Dove** as well. Raptors were represented by a colourful **Savanna Hawk**, a quickly maneuvering **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture** and a characteristic **Black-collared Hawk**.





Gabor pointed out a male **Rusty-coloured Seedeater** and soon we realized there was a whole flock around. **Silver-beaked Tanager** and **Grayish Saltator** was found, while Marcos heard **Yellowish Pipit**, but we could not see it. But we could not miss the first huge **Jabiru Storks** and **Southern Screammers**. We also saw a **Purplish Jay** and heard a **Great Antshrike**. **Monk Parakeet** was quite common and soon we found the first **Black Howler monkeys** on the tour and also a **Black Tegú**. Later on we stopped at a riverside shady place and we just could not believe our eyes that in front of the truck on the nearest tree we had a pair of amazing **Hyacinth Macaws**. They were very cooperative, waited until everybody get off the truck, prepared cameras and/or bins and got excellent views. It turned out they had a nest nearby. One of them was flying so close that almost touched Gabor's head! What a unique experience to have the World's largest parrots so close. We spent some time to lure out **Greater Thornbird** and later we found 3 different species of Woodpeckers as well on the nearby trees: **Little-, Green-barred** and **Golden-green Woodpecker**. Everybody had excellent views of an **Orange-backed Troupial** which this time moved at lower level and we also had a posing male **Black-tailed Tityra** higher up. While some people tried to get a glimpse of a family of **Thrushlike Wrens** others enjoyed perfect views of **Neotropical Cormorants** and **Ringed Kingfisher** from a jetty.

Finally we retreated to our base and soon prepared for lunch. Lunch was again very rich, so after that we surely needed a bit of a siesta. Those who could not rest saw **White Woodpecker** and **Toco Toucan** close to our buildings.



During the afternoon after 3 we walked out first across the open fields and then into the more wooded area. At the first part alongside the road at a small pond we had **Yacare Caymans** and **Ringed Kingfisher**. **Guira Cuckoos** moved along the fences and we had **Monk Parakeets**. Later as we were crossing the fields we found **Great Rufous Woodcreeper** and a **Rufescent Tiger Heron** which we could admire through a Swarovski scope. When we reached a more forested area we had **Golden-collared Macaws** and **Grey-necked Woodrails**. We also had a **Red-throated Piping Guan** and **Squirrel Cuckoo**. It was quite hot and people felt too tired, so we asked the truck to come for us instead of walking further. The last bird we saw during this walk was a lurking **White-browed Spinetail**. We spotted a **Grey Brocket Deer** as well.

We had our dinner from 7pm and we were ready to go out for a night safari after 8pm. We missed Barbara who coped with dehydration, but from time to time different members and leaders of the group tried to check her today and next day. The notable creatures during the evening outing were **Great Horned Owls** in the garden, **Brasilian Rabbit** alongside the road, **Common Paraques** and a black and white snake, which we identified later as a **Black False Cobra Drymarchon corals**.



### Day3 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2017

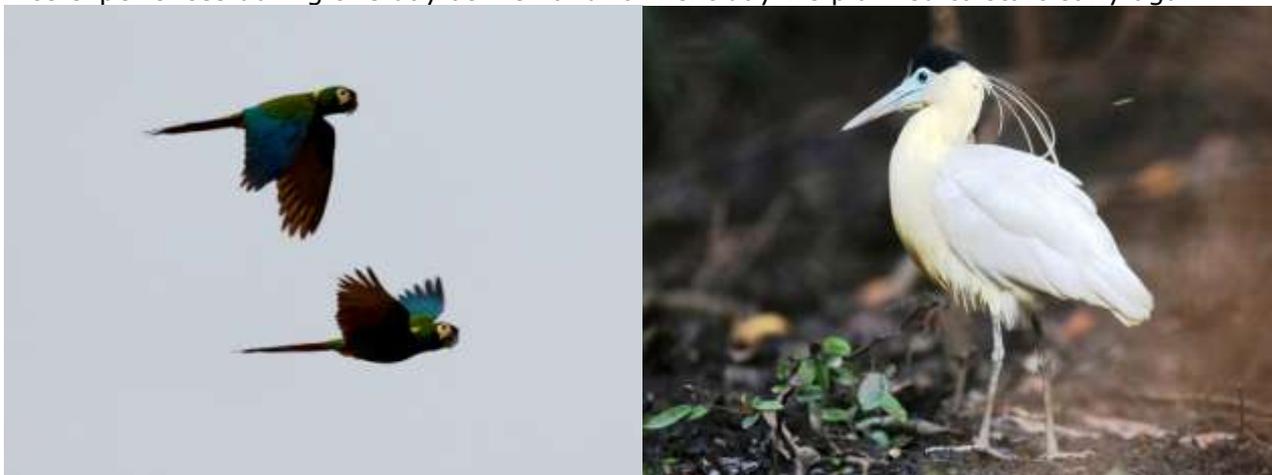
Out of the many species which were found during today's prebreakfast walk we would mention **Streaked Flycatcher, Black Skimmer, Aplomado Falcon** and of course the omnipresent **Greater Rhea**. At 7am we had another excellent breakfast and at 8am we were ready for another **Safari Ride**. After a **Tropical Kinbird** the first exciting bird was a **Blue-throated Piping Guan**. Later we witnessed a **Toco Toucan** actively searching nests for robbing them. No wonder all the small birds around tried to chase it away. Raptors were represented by a beautiful **Crane Hawk** and a **Plumbeous Kite**, plus suddenly we discovered a huge circling flock of **Snail Kites**, well over a hundred individuals migrating. After a few **Blue-fronted Parrots** and a pair of **Scaled Doves** our truck suddenly stopped below a tree. The driver said there is a bird up there. First we had a hard time to find anything until we have not realized that one of the broken branches is actually a **Great Potoo**. This was a very nice surprise and would have been quite difficult to find it without the local knowledge. A bit further a pond was full with Caymans and they were surrounded by **Black Vultures**. Later we stopped at a lakeside area. Not too far we could finally see a lurking **Yellowish Pipit**. An immature **Great Black Hawk** was much easier. **Monk Parakeets** were quite loud and we admired **Roseate Spoonbills, Southern Screamers** and **Large-billed Terns**. **Rusty-margined Flycatcher** was new and we had again **Orange-backed Troupial** and **Yellow-rumped Cacique**. We also saw **Lesser Kiskadee** and **Greyish Saltator**.



Before we went back to the lodge Marcos explained the importance of the **Apple Snails** which produce the necessary oxygen back into the ponds. At noon we had our lunch and later Andrea and Gabor got a surprise, the airline after a lot of debate finally transferred the lost luggage. Andrea excitedly checked inside, it was obvious that somebody searched heavily all the content, but it seemed nothing was taken out, so they happily signed the papers. Just when the courier left they realized they should have announced that the suitcase itself was totally devastated, missing all the handles and one of the wheels were totally broken off. After a short afternoon siesta we went out again, this time we travelled first alongside the Transpantaneira road and then on a road of a private ranch where we had a comfort stop before reaching a riverbank from where we **set off on a boat tour**. Before we reached this point we saw **White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Undulated Tinamu, Plumbeous Kite, Orange-backed Troupial, Blue-throated Piping Guan and Chestnut-bellied Chachalaca**.



During the time when we waited that our boatmen showels out the earlier rains water from the boats we had an excellent surprise in the form of landing **Golden-collared Macaws** just on the other side of the river. We started finally around 4.30pm and spent about 1,5 hour on water surrounded by incredibly lush vegetation. As soon as we got in the boats we started to find excellent species such as **Rufescent Tiger Heron**, the rare **Green & Rufous Kingfisher** and the tiny **American Pigmy Kingfisher**! Wow, what a start! Later on we managed to watch for a while **Neotropical Otters** up close which was a unique experience. **Ringed Kingfisher** and **Anhinga** was quite common. Once we encountered a male **Muscovy Duck** and we saw a few **Yellow-billed Cardinals** on the bushes alongside the riverbank. We could observe **Limpkin** and **Grey-necked Wood-rail** very well as well. But perhaps the best was when we stopped the engine and silently waited at a little bay where a beautiful **Capped Heron** came out of the dense vegetation and crossed just in front of us. We also added **Striated Heron** to the daily list. Finally we travelled back in the same way to the hotel, however by this time it got dark so it was almost like a night safari. The **Great Horned Owls** greeted us again close to the reception building. We had our last dinner at this excellent place and discussed the plan for tomorrow. We returned to our rooms for a good sleep with a lot of nice experiences during this day as well and for next day we planned to start early again!





#### Day4 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2017

Everybody was quite tired, so just a few of us made the pre-breakfast drive out at 5.45. We waited till 5.55 to give a chance for the late arrivals but then we set off. Well, pretty soon it turned out it was worth the effort since within few minutes we found a **Giant Anteater**. WOW, what an incredibly designed creature! It was very interesting to witness this unique mammal walking around, checking termite nests. We followed this amazing mammal for a long time and could hardly pay any attention to birds although we had **White-rumped Monjita, Hyacinth Macaw, Roadside Hawk, Yellow-headed Caracara and Rufescent Tiger Heron** around. We also heard a nearby **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl** which we tried to call closer without success. We returned quite happily to have breakfast and after packing and checking out we get into 2 vans to make it even more comfortable and started our **journey down to Porto Jofre through the Transantaneira road**. Soon we had **Peach-fronted Parakeets and Blue-fronted Parrots**. But the real surprise was suddenly to see another **Giant Anteater** alongside the road. We all quickly jumped out and we were so happy that this time everybody had a great view of this enigmatic mammal. Every other car or bus stopped and people ran to take photos or just simply look at the animal. Later on we continued our way and some of the group members saw **Laughing Falcon**, while all of us had **Marsh Deer**, a big group of **Capibaras** and **White-rumped Swallows**.



We stopped at another bridge which gave us an excellent opportunity of an upclose observation of 2 **Jabirus**, a **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture** and a **Southern Caracara**. They were so close that we could even see a very interesting interaction: the Caracara started to approach the feeding Vulture and in the meantime the skin colour at the base of its beak turned from red into yellow, which is a clear sign that the bird was in an aggressive mood. Indeed it chased away the Vulture and got its food. But interestingly it was not the end of the story since soon one of the Jabirus took over the leftovers from the Caracara as well and made the picking order clear. The last impressive movement was when a male **Marsh Deer** with quite sizeable antlers was running closer and flashed most of the birds away. Later on we saw a **Capped Heron** and we drove through a **cloud or river of butterflies, mainly Sulphurs**. This amount of butterflies is hard to see anywhere in the World, we felt it was matched just by the wintering Monarchs in Mexico. Driving miles through a constant stream of butterflies was a highlight for many of us.

We also stopped at a huge **Monk Parakeet** nest where the birds were very busy renovating the home of the colony, courting and mating. We had many **Yellow-rumped Caciques** nesting on the same tree as well. As we drove further suddenly a mammal ran across which we identified as a **Neotropical River Otter**. Later on we also added **Snail Kite, Laughing Falcon, Little Cuckoo, Scarlet-headed Blackbird and White-crested**

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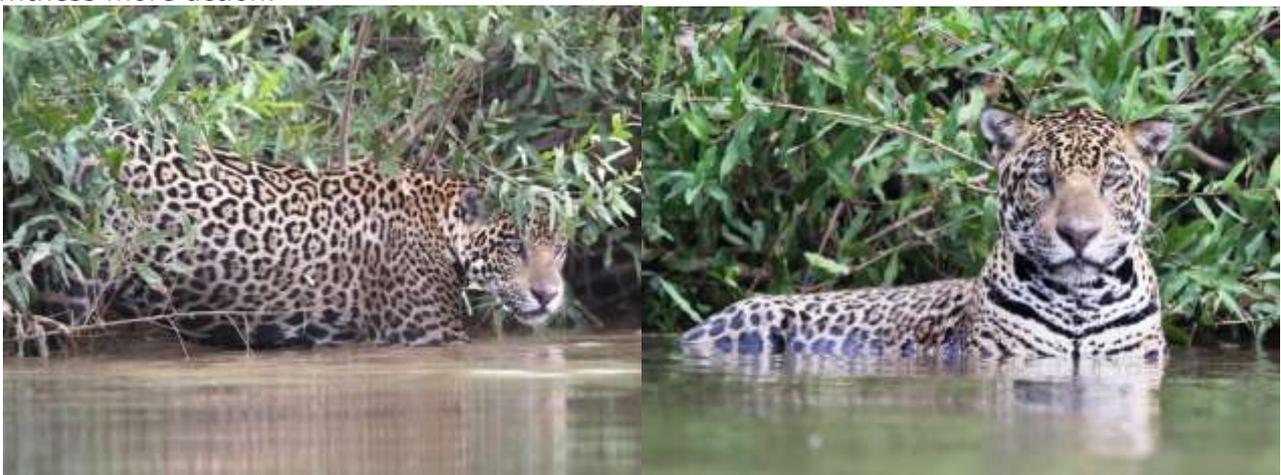
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**Tyrannulet.** We also stopped at a place which turned out to be very productive, we found several species here such as **White-wedged Piculet, Little Woodpecker, Pale Baywing, Rusty-backed Spinetail, Barred Antshrike, Gray-crested Cacholote, Common Tody Flycatcher, Fuscous Flycatcher and Dusky-capped Flycatcher.**



Finally we arrived around 13.30 to our new home for the next 8 days, a nice riverboat with 3 levels. Most of the cabins were at the lower level, the mid-level had the kitchen, a bar and a spacious restaurant with panoramic view and a lecture hall extension. At the upper deck we could find a jacuzzi and a barbecue bar and again perfect all around view. We had 2 additional local guides on board, Juliano and Max, so the guide and guest ratio was really excellent. From 14 o'clock we enjoyed our first tasty lunch which was followed by many more during the next days. Everybody was very excited by the possibility of going out as soon as possible for our first speedboat excursion so by 15 o'clock we were already searching Jaguars. Well, we did not need to wait too long, within half an hour we arrived to a spot from where a few people already enjoyed excellent views of a **Jaguar** from some small boats. We silently joined to them and admired this top predator up close. For a while the Jaguar just enjoyed laying down in the shallow water, but after a while he sat, looked around and later even stood up. The most exciting moment was when he started to walk in the water among some bushes and he was moving with slow, cat-like lurking, clearly hunting. Woow! We were not sure wether he was after a fish or a cayman, but there was no question about that he was very much interested in something in the water. In the meantime from time to time more and more motorboats arrived, so it became a bit crowded and noisy sometimes, no wonder we could not witness more action.



Still we had some interesting birds as well such as **Common Piping Guan, Solitary Caciue, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture.** Suddenly a raptor flew across quite quickly and we identified as a **Long-winged Harrier**, the only one seen during the whole tour. We had **Blue-crowned Trogon** and **Yellow-billed Cardinal** and we heard **Undulated Tinamu** alongside the river. Unfortunately after spending about 2 hours on the water a storm

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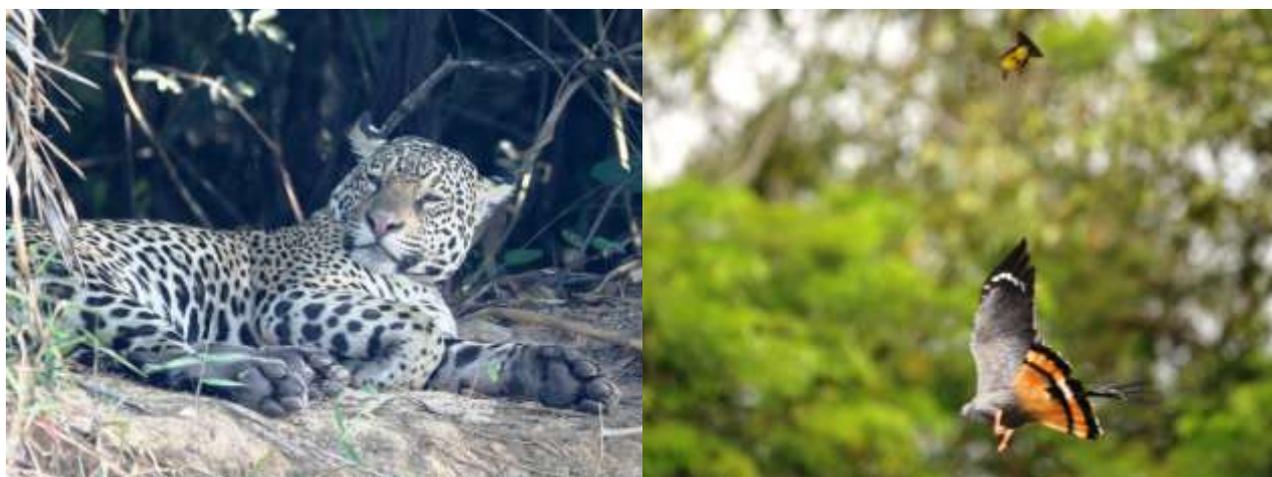
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developed and chased us away, but we left with excellent experiences. After returning to the floating hotel we had hot showers and prepared for the dinner. Juliano also presented a small talk about Pantanal's wildlife.

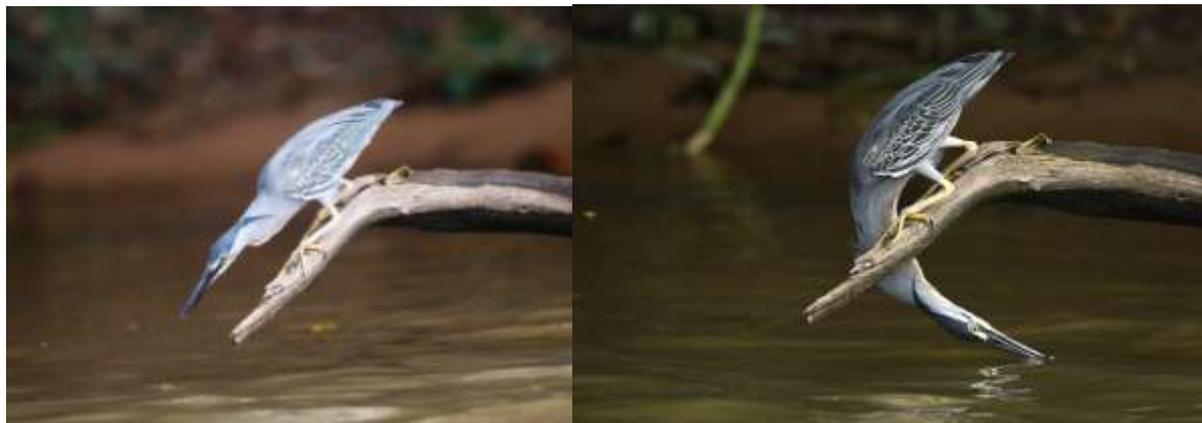


### Day5 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2017

Today we started quite early with a breakfast at 5.45, so an hour later we were already out in the small boats. The first birds were **Black Skimmers** which we had seen before, but pretty soon we started to see new species including **Pied Plover** and **Black-capped Donacobius**. There was no lack of **Striated Herons, Anhingas, Cocoi Herons, Shiny Cowbirds and Yellow-billed Cardinals** either. We had **Squirrel Cuckoo, Greater Ani, Black-fronted Nunbird** and a new pigeon, named **Picazurro**. Soon we reached a point where a few boats already waited and we realized that there was a **Jaguar** enjoying the shade under the trees. We stopped nearby, watched this great predator. During waiting for any action we started to realize that this spot was full with life. **Tropical Kingbird** moved back and forth and an upclose **Black-backed Water Tyrant** was new. We witnessed **Common Tody Flycatchers** visiting their hanging down nest regularly and **Southern Rough-winged Swallows** did the same thing at the riverbank. We also enjoyed excellent views of **Rufous-tailed Jacamar and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets**. The Jaguar looked up a few times, we got excited once or twice when something caught her attention, but quite sensibly she decided to extend her siesta. We stayed a bit longer, surely not bored, especially that we continued finding more things, such as **Yellow-rumped Cacique, Yellow-billed Cardinal** and a lovely, hovering **Black-chested Mango** which was new. Finally we said goodbye to our second Jaguar and travelled further. We witnessed an **Osprey** carrying a fish and a **Common Piping Guan** flying across the river. All of us got excited when we saw our first **Brown Capuchin Monkeys**. In the meantime we heard **Undulated Tinamu**. Later on we had **Orange-backed Troupial, White-rumped Swallow, Green Kingfisher, Solitary Cacique** and Gabor found a new species, **Epaulet Oriole**.



Bit further we witnessed a very interesting behavior of a **Striated Heron** which first caught a large horsefly, then sat on a dead branch overhanging the river a feet above, suddenly dropped the insect into the water upstream, let it float down about 2 feet watching carefully if a fish comes to eat it. If not then the insect was picked up again and fishing continued. It is a proof that herons would not necessarily fail on a cognitive test! :-)



Later on we caught up with some raptors, namely **Great Black-, Savanna and Black-collared Hawk**. Before we returned to lunch we had **Southern Screamer, Yellow-billed Tern** and two **Toco Toucans** as well. Between 12 and 13 we enjoyed a great lunch which was followed by scanning the wildlife around us from the deck and siesta until 4pm. Then we went out for 2 hours on small boats to find more birds. There were plenty of **Striated Herons**, a few **Jabirus** and **Common Piping Guans**. The **Roadside Hawk** Gabor started to nickname Riverside Hawk and we also found **Squirrel Cuckoo**. After having the first **Sungrebe** on the tour we saw a beautiful **Chestnut-eared Aracaris** again which was followed by **Yellow-headed Caracara** and **Common Piping Guan** we also had **Solitary** and **Spotted Sandpipers**, the latter one was also new for the tour. Further species included **Picazurro Pigeon, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Yellow-rumped Cacique** and **Thrushlike Wren**. We finished the day with a nice variety of parrots such as **Blue-headed** and the new **Orange-winged Parrots**, plus **White-eyed** and **Monk Parakeets**.

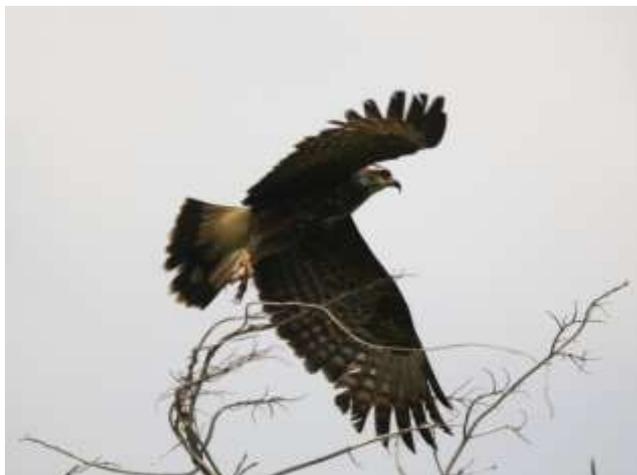


## Day6 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2017

Today we started a bit later than usual, met on the upper deck 6.30 and enjoyed the view and the fresh air. Also it was a perfect time for the first birds such **Blue-fronted Parrots** and **Yellow-chevroned Parakeets**. So our floating hotel started to move as well, so we started to see the first **Striated Herons, Anhingas** and **Neotropical Cormorants**. But perhaps the main highlights were the first **Black-crowned Night Herons** and **Howler Monkeys**.



After another fulfilling buffet breakfast we got into the smaller boats and started a discovery of the region. There were a lot of **Large-billed Terns**, but a few **Yellow-billed Terns** as well, giving a good chance to compare them. Beside the plenty of **Striated Herons** we had a few **Snowy Egrets** and **Chestnut-bellied Chachalacas**. **Great Egrets** not caused any attention, but 3 **Roseate Spoonbills** did. Soon we arrived to the headquarters of the national park. Here we found first **Little Woodpecker** and nesting **Yellow-rumped Cacique**, **Monk Parakeet**, **Southern Rough-winged Swallow**. We had a few **White-tipped Dove** and one **Picui Ground Dove** as well searching food on the ground. A couple of **Southern Caracaras** were around and a few **Cattle Tyrants**. We said goodbye to our hosts, get into our boats and soon we saw an **old man** fishing from his boat. It turned out he is **the last member of his original tribe**, no one can speak his original native guato language by now. He caught several piranhas, baited by Capibara meat, all stored in the dugout canoe in the company of a machete and a rifle. We wondered which was older, the rifle or its owner? Later on we went into a side channel till a rocky hillside where we had a short walk. We discovered ancient carvings and paintings on the surface of huge slabs of rock. It was fascinating to think about how many years ago this artwork was produced by the local people. Beside a **Thrushlike Wren** we had **Straight-billed Woodcreeper** here. As we left the area **Black and Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures** were in the sky. Suddenly we pushed a **Least Bittern** out of the channel-side, close to the meeting points of the Paraguay and Cuiaba River. We also had **Snail Kite and Road-side Hawk** before we returned to the floating hotel to have our lunch. As usual we enjoyed a nice buffet lunch so everybody could find something tasty. The leaders decided to give time for an afternoon siesta, an idea quickly was accepted by all members of the group. At 4 o'clock pm we ventured out again to a nearby private reserve, named Acorizal. A local NGO protects here more than 13 thousand hectares land. We had an interesting adventure here which involved first traveling on a tractor-drawn carriage followed by a walk through a forest on a local trail. The majority of the group crossed through a small stream, while Barbara and Julia stayed behind with Max who pointed out **Undulated Tinamu and Blue-crowned Motmot**. Within a few hundred meters we have reached a natural pool created by another stream. Gabor went ahead and since he was spared by piranhas and caymans most of the group members could not resist to join and enjoy the fresh, cool water.



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A beautiful butterfly landed on Gabor's nose, so he swam around with this strange decoration for a while. Mundi found several large tadpoles and Ric filmed fish. We heard a **White-bellied Warbler** but unfortunately could not see it.

When the group started to return on the trail Gabor found **Gilded Hummingbird** and **Fork-tailed Woodnymph**. **Blue-crowned Trogons** were active alongside the trail, but just few of us managed to get a glimpse. Same was true for a small group of **Green-cheeked Parakeets** which are quite localized birds. We returned to the tractor and later on much to our surprise Max found close to the track a local **endemic Titi Monkey species**. Juliano imitated their voice which seemed successful so everybody managed to have a great view of these interesting mammals. In the meantime a **Plumbeous Kite** crossed and we also saw two pairs of macaws which turned out to be **Red-and-Green Macaws**.

We arrived back to the small boats around 7 and reached the floating hotel at 7.30 pm, so decided to have dinner at 8. After dinner we filled out the species list and exchanged some stories and finally retreated into our cabins after 10 pm.

### Day 7 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2017

Next morning we had breakfast already at 6, so we could leave the floating hotel around 6.45 to return to the Acorizal area. On the way there we saw the usual things such as **Striated Herons, Smooth-billed Anis, Cocoi Herons, Yellow-billed Terns, Shiny Cowbirds**. We also had **Orange-backed Troupials, Black-capped Donacobius, Southern Lapwing and Southern Screamer**. But perhaps the best was to see a Sungrebe which instead of disappearing among the vegetation flew across the channel in front of us. At the center first we looked around in the garden where we found **Brown-chested Martin, Rufous Hornero, Grey-crested Cacholote, Rufous-bellied Thrush. Scaled Dove** was found for the second time during the tour and one **Roseate Spoonbill** flew across close to the tree full with nesting **Yellow-rumped Cacique**. We continuously heard **Undulated Tinamou** and from time to time a group of noisy **Rufous-bellied Chachalacas** tried to cry out louder and louder.



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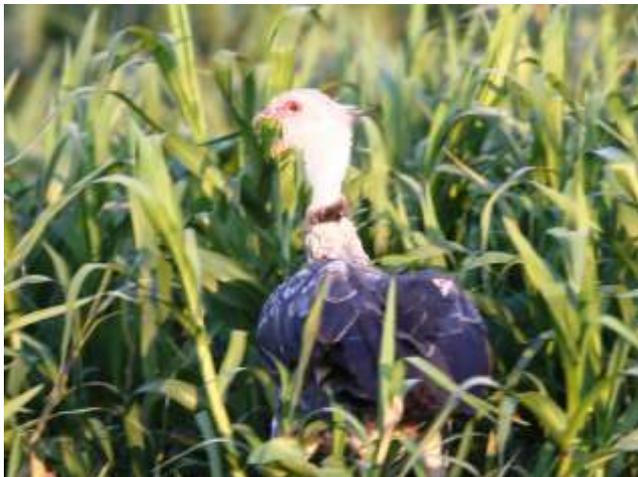
Once a large group of **Fork-tailed Flycatchers** flew across. Later we entered into the forest on a trail, but it was very warm and humid with not much bird activity. Still after a while we found **White-bellied Warbler, Silver-beaked Tanager and Black-fronted Nunbird**. The most exciting part was to find some new species for the tour, such as **Flavescent Warbler, Buff-throated Woodcreeper** and the very localized **Bolivian Slaty Antshrike** which lives in Brazil just here at the Corumba region. We also added **Brown-crested Flycatcher** and Tropical Pewee. Finally we returned to the garden and found 3 **Little Woodpecker** together. We boarded into the small boats again, continuously checking the sky, because we felt a rain was coming. We were unfortunately right, during the travel back we got a bit wet. Around 9.30 we reached the boatel and enjoyed a hot coffee or tea. We enjoyed the beautiful scenery and some birds from the upper deck. Suddenly it was lunchtime again. We had excellent roasted chicken, followed by a very tempting passion fruit mousse.

During the afternoon we were sailing alongside attractive hills totally covered by amazing tropical forests. From time to time it rained, but from the comfortable upper deck we kept finding wildlife ranging from **Capibaras** through **Southern Screamer, Geat Black Hawk, Snail Kite, Green Ibis, Limpkin, Black-backed Water-tyrant** till **Yellow-billed Tern, Black-capped Night-heron**. Once we thought we found Roseate Spoonbills in a distance, but when we have checked with our bins much to our surprise it turned out those were beautiful flowers of the **Giant Amazonian Waterlily**. But later on we found **Roseate Spoonbills** and a few **Bare-faced Ibises** as well which were new for the tour. Beside the common birds we have to mention a few pairs of **Golden-collared Macaws, Yellow-chevroned Parakeets and White-eyed Parakeets**. Everybody saw well **Sungrebe** and a few **Unicolored Blackbirds**. At one point we had 2 **Giant River Otters** and a **Pale-legged Hornero** was new afterwards. Raptors were represented by **Osprey** and **Great Black Hawk**. We watched the riverbank for hours, found some **Capybaras**, but no other mammals. Mundi was taking a photo of a swimming Capybara when suddenly she realized it has a different tail! It turned out to be a **Jaguar** which quickly disappeared in the dense vegetation. No one else managed to take a photo, but most of us had a few of this incredible predator again.



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We were still discussing this observation when a **Cream-colored Woodpecker** flew across and not much later we had another new species of Woodpecker, a female **Crimson-crested**. Maria Jose pointed out a **Black Howler Monkey** and on the same tree we found **Brown Capuchin** as well. At dusk we saw a **Band-tailed Nighthawk** and plenty of **Greater Fishing Bats**. For a change tonight we had finally a lighter supper than usual, but still we could choose from 3 different types of soups, such as chicken broth, pumpkin soup and the most exciting piranha soup. After dinner we had a lecture about the Pantanal's threats.



### Day8 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2017

Today we took it lazy, so breakfast was at 7 o'clock. In the meantime we cruised through nice, intact forest and saw a few things such as 2 **Crane Hawks** beside each other on a tree, a **Common Piping Guan** crossing the river or a perched juvenile **Rufescent Tiger-Heron**. A **Blue-crowned Trogon** or a **Boat-billed Heron** was more difficult to find. Later we left the floating hotel around 8 o'clock. After a few miles we found a group of **Howler Monkeys** with a baby among them and we also saw a **Crane Hawk** on a nest. **Solitary Cacique**, **Pale-vented Pigeon** and **Sungrebe** were seen and we heard **Little Cuckoo**. **Ringed** and **Amazon Kingfishers** side by side offered good comparison possibilities. We had a few **Pale-legged Horneros** alongside the river and we found **Rufescent Tiger Heron** from time to time as well. Among roosting **Large-billed Terns** we found one **Yellow-billed Tern** which was brave enough to stay when we approached despite all his larger cousins left, making alarm calls. We also stopped at a tree-trunk which was covered by **Long-nosed Bats**. We enjoyed upclose views of **Yellow-rumped Caciques** at a tree full with nests and witnessed how an **Orange-backed Troupial** occupied one of the nests. When we looked up higher we realized that more than a hundred **Snail Kites** travelled by the help of a thermal from one area to another. We also continued our journey and later on we saw a group of birds flying in the sky forming a V shape. They turned out to be **Bare-faced Ibises**. **Barn Swallow** was a new species and although it is common at home it was clear that for local birders it is a rarity.





The morning also produced a new Woodpecker species which caused a bit of debate later on, but with a photo and using several guidebooks Gabor identified it as a female **Pale-crested Woodpecker**. Later on we returned to the main boat and early afternoon we had a barbecue on the upper deck which was a pleasant surprise. During the afternoon we were sailing further while some of us enjoyed the scenery while others rested. At around 4 o'clock we ventured out again, this time visiting a side channel at Porto Conceicao. We had close views of **Solitary Sandpiper**, a beautiful male **Muscovy Duck**, a handsome group of **White-faced Whistling Duck**, **Great Black Hawk** and **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture**. We also had **White-tipped Dove**, **White-headed Marsh Tyrant**, **Pale-legged Hornero**.



**South American Snipe** was a new species, it was well camouflaged. As we turned back we saw amazing cloud formations beautifully colored by the descending sun. It was obvious that a large area was covered by a huge storm. We had **Common Piping Guan**, **Green Ibis**, **Black-collared Hawk** and **Blue-fronted Parrot** and saw hundreds of **Neotropical Cormorants** before we reached our floating hotel. We enjoyed a beautiful sunset and saw several **Band-tailed Nighthawks** and heard a few **Common Paraques**. After dinner we completed our list and watched a slideshow of today's photos. For days we have not seen any other signs of humans, maybe at the beginning occasionally a local fishermen, but surely no other boats of travel agents and loud tourists. We were simply surrounded by pure nature. :-)



During these several full days we enjoyed this relaxed atmosphere and were trying to search and find more **Jaguars, Giant River Otters, Capybaras** and whatever wildlife could show us.



### Day 9 30<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Today we spent most of the day in the **Taima Reserve**. It is basically a huge island, created by the Paraguay River and it became a protected area in 2009. Our original plan was to send the floating hotel ahead on the main branch while with the smaller boats we would go on the other side and then down to meet with the floating hotel. But that could involve several hours high speed transiting, so instead of that we decided to travel with lower speed and concentrate on finding mammals, stopping for birds just if we have something new or otherwise interesting. This strategy worked very well since after the first **Yacare Caymans and Capibaras** within less than an hour we found a **Jaguar**. Unfortunately since we were quite close and Jaguars here are not habituated it disappeared in the dense vegetation very quickly, so lot of the group members could not have a view of it. Leaving that area we saw **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Common Piping Guan**, a distant flying **Toco Toucan**, a nice pair of **Great Curassow and Great Egret**. A bit later on we found some more mammals in the form of **Black Howler Monkeys**. A small **Green Iguana** was discovered on a tree, but we had to find a large adult on the riverbank later to successfully photograph it. We added to the day list **Solitary Cacique, Black-collared Hawk and Amazon Kingfisher**, but a group of **Boat-billed Herons** and two flying **Roseate Spoonbills** caused much more excitement among the members of our group. At one point Gabor called out **Greater Antshrike**, but it disappeared too fast.

At a side channel which opened up into a huge lake we saw a large family of **Capibaras** who could not feel really safe since they were surrounded by **Caymans**. On the other hand Caymans were not safe either, a nearby carcass of one of them, half eaten by a Jaguar was a clear evidence of that. **Southern Screamers** were in good numbers and we had a few **Savanna Hawks** as well, on flying across with a snake hanging down from its talons. **Black-capped Donacobius** was around in good numbers with **Unicolored Blackbirds**.



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Some of us had very shortly another elusive mammal, an **Ocelot**, disappearing very fast among the roots of large trees at the riverbank. But we had pronged and excellent views of a few **Giant River Otters** which we followed up and down for a while, many times with just floating, engines turned off. This gave a great chance to photograph or simply just enjoy the view of these unique mammals. After 11 am. we returned to our boat and prepared for the lunch. As always we had again different choices and very tasty food. After lunch a few of us checked the both sides of the river for a couple of hours while others enjoyed a drink or the comfort of the cool cabin. Those who looked could see some **Sungrebes, Anhingas, Donacobius, Parakeets** and many more. We managed to have few glimpses of **Great Antshrike** as well.

Around 4pm we ventured out again on smaller boats. First we saw a male **Muscovy Duck**, later a **Sungrebe** and a **Black-collared Hawk**. At a small sandy beach we found an immature **Black Skimmer** which we witnessed feeding. At the same area we could compare an adult **Yellow-billed Cardinal** with a juvenile who still had orange head. Later on we found two **Scarlet-headed Blackbirds** and beside them an **Unicoloured Blackbird** gave a good chance to compare. It was funny to see how the male Scarlet-headed Blackbirds puffed themselves up to look bigger.



Further up in the channel a few of us had **Little Cuckoo** and also **Southern Caracara**. A few **Great Egrets** were around as well, but a really great find was a **Least Bittern**. Hundreds of **American Cliff Swallows** searched a site to sleep, so the sky was full. When we searched a second **Least Bittern** Juliano found a big rarity, a **Subtropical Doradito**, this species is very rare and uncertain. It could be a new split in the future. A few photos were taken about this small but attractive bird. We also found a small snake pretending he was just a dead twig. When we were about to leave the channel we realized how beautiful the sunset was, so we spent time with enjoying the scenery, some of us taking photos and videos. Finally we boarded again our floating hotel and got ready for the dinner. As it got dark we became surrounded by **Band-tailed Nighthawks** and **Greater Fishing Bats**. We heard several **Paraques** as well.



### Day 10 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017

We had breakfast again at 6 and right after that we left the boatel, passing a huge former beef meat factory which was nicely painted. **Toco Toucan** flew across and in one bay a group of **Roseate Spoonbills** waited for sunshine. **Blue-fronted Parrots** were around in good numbers and about 10 adult **Black Skimmers** flew low about the water in small groups. An **Orange-backed Troupial** landed on top of a tall tree while an **Osprey** went alongside the riverbank. As we entered into a smaller channel we saw a **Sungrebe** and a **Pale-legged Hornero**. Juliano found a new species for us, a male **White-bellied Seedeater**. The next amazing bird was a **Gray-headed Kite** which we all saw amazingly close. **Jabirus** flew over our head and soon after that we found a great group of **Giant River Otters**. We watched them popping up and disappearing under the water surface several times and witnessed how they consumed fish. Nobody paid too much attention on the kingfishers despite the fact that beside the regular ones an **American Pygmy Kingfisher** was around as well. We had **Limpkin**, **Chaco Chachalacas**, **Orange-winged Parrots** and a perfectly posing female **Great Curassow** as well. Another new species came in the form of **Gray-fronted Dove** and later on a juvenile **Snail Kite** offered excellent observation possibilities. Many of us felt that floating in this calm side channel was one of the nicest experiences during the tour. The beauty of the place, the **Giant River Otters**, the various birds and the air full with bird songs made this site really unforgettable. Just when we were about to leave this side channel our boat driver pointed out a **Great Potoo** on a large dead branch. We returned to the main river, but suddenly a huge black cloud came down and within a minute we were surprised by a strong rain. Almost everything totally got wet, we just managed to hide our cameras, books and notes. Fortunately the boatel was not too far, so soon we dried ourselves in our cabins and gathered in the restaurant for a hot drink. Even during the rain we could find very good birds such as a male **Bare-necked Fruitcrow** which was found by Ric. This section of the river was full with sand banks and little islets and these were perfect gathering places for **Pied Plovers**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Black Skimmers** and at one of these we saw **White-rumped Sandpipers** as well. From now on we started to see **Jabirus** and **Woodstorks** as well. At noon we had lunch and discussed that we will leave the boat and explore one of the last side channels as soon as possible.





But unfortunately weather crossed our plans since it started to rain again. We wanted to get out again right after lunch, but another quite constant rain discouraged us unfortunately. Still we could watch the scenery from the boat and also checked out the islands and both sides of the river. Among the shorebirds we found a new species for the tour which was **White-rumped Sandpiper**. As we travelled further North we started to see more and more **Jabirus** and **Wood Storks**. Quite regularly pairs of parrots flew across, most of them proved to be **Blue-fronted and Orange-winged**, but a pair of **Red-bellied Macaws** were a great new surprise. We heard a distant call which Juliano identified as **Piratic Flycatcher**. Later on we saw large colonies of **Black Skimmers** and terns, some still having large babies. We gathered in the restaurant, spent time with exchanging stories, checking photos and of course looking around and checking birds regularly. Not without success since in this way we could add **Black-crowned Tytira** as a new species to the list. From 4.30 till 6pm we ventured out again, but by the end it was raining again. We saw a group of **Capibaras** swimming in front, so we approached them slowly and found a mother with a baby on the bank. Suddenly a male **Giant Cowbird** approached them and hopped on the back of the mother and later also on the baby, checking their fur and skin for anything edible. They patiently let it do the cleaning process. We also had some **Pied Plovers**. later on we found a **Toco Toucan** and from time to time a pair of **Orange-winged Parrots** flew across as well. We visited a side channel as well where we had **Chachalacas**, **Greater Ani**, **Amazon Kingfisher**, a female **Great Antshrike**, **Green Ibis**, **Striated Heron** and another **Toco Toucan**.



### Day 11 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2017

The first day of the month was sadly our last day on our floating hotel. We were travelling alongside long sandy beaches and between islands and although the river was very wide the water was not very deep, so we actually stuck a couple of times. But our crew was very professional and however we were dreaming about to remain here for longer they made it sure that we reach Caceres in time.

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Today we saw more **Ospreys** than during the whole tour and we started to see more **Jabirus** and **Woodstorks** again. **Orange-winged Parrots** were regular today as well. We had a juvenile **Great Black Hawk**, a **Black-fronted Nunbird** and saw plenty of Capibaras as well. Suddenly Andrea started to scream: macaws, macaws... and she pointed to the sky where 2 **Red & Green Macaws** flew across which was a beautiful surprise.

Later on she also pointed out in a distance a **Toco Toucan** working hard to get out a chick from a nest. Further on we saw a large group of **White-headed Wistling Ducks**. A few people saw **Blue-crowned Motmot** and we also had several different Kingfishers as well. We heard a new song which Juliano identified as **Fawn-breasted Wren** call. Another new species was **Swallow-winged Puffbird** which sat out for a while very cooperatively. We also heard **White-lored Spinetail**.

We spent quite a lot of time with observing a male and a female **Green Iguanas** searching food at the sandy riverbank. We also found a river turtle with a baby, offering good photo opportunity.

As usual around noon we had our lunch. Later on at one point beside hundreds of **Black Vultures** we witnessed several hundreds of **Jabirus** and **Woodstorks** circling in the air majestically. We felt its a kind of saying goodbye to this marvelous area.

Since we lost some time when we were stuck in the riverbed with the boat we made a decision to load all the luggages and get into the speedboats since our transfers were already waiting for us at Caceres. But before that we took several group photos, also with the very helpful and smiling crew.

Within less than half an hour later we arrived to Caceres where we get into 2 Mercedes Sprinters.

Andrea and Gabor was surprised to see the other boat on the riverbank what they used before on another tour. From Caceres to Cuiaba the distance is about 230kms mainly on good road. Instead of rushing we took our time and also broke the journey to have a comfort stop and stretch our legs. Even in the garden of the shop we had **Shining Cowbird**, **Scaled Dove**, **House Sparrow** and **Monk Parakeets**.



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We arrived to a modern airport hotel around 5pm, checked in and met 7pm in the hall. From here we walked to a nearby restaurant which was a final surprise: a great Churrascaria where you select several side dishes from a buffet table while freshly roasted meat was cut and served by busy waiters at your table. Of course we celebrated with caipirinha as well. This was an excellent finish of a unique holiday of a lifetime. We said goodbye to each other sadly.

### Day 12 – 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2017



Maria Jose had to leave next early morning, Gabor and Andrea a bit later continued to another marvelous area at the Atlantic Forest for an extension while Ric volunteered to show the monument of America do Sul and a city park of Cuiaba. So the rest of the group started their journey back to London in the afternoon where they arrived next day.



We hope that with reading this daily diary and looking at the photos we can make you travel back in time and bring back all the lovely memories of this

amazing journey! We hope that sooner or later we can enjoy again an amazing Honeyguide Holiday together in such a great company! Hope to see you soon!!!

With hugs  
Gabor and Andrea

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