

PANTANAL, BRAZIL - Sept 1-12, 2018

TRIP REPORT and Photos by Adrian Binns

Day 1 / Sept 1 - Chapada dos Guimaraes

Our Wildside Nature Tours adventure in Brazil began in Cuiaba, the capital city of Mato Grosso, and gateway to the Pantanal. Here we met our guides Leonardo and Fisher, and drove a short distance northeast to Chapada dos Guimaraes to first explore cerrado (scrub savannah) habitat. Fortified by an excellent buffet lunch at Trapiche in Chapada, we checked into the Pousada Casa da Quineira, and eagerly began birding.



The lush hotel grounds highlights a gallery forest over which Swallow-tailed Kites effortlessly glided, and both Red-shouldered Macaws (looking more like parakeets with bare white facial skin) and huge Red-and-Green Macaws flew by. We enjoyed our first looks of some common species - Silver-beaked Tanagers and Pale-breasted Thrushes, including one with berries stuffed in its mouth. We heard the incessant calls of a Ferruginous Pygmy Owl.

On the outskirts of town, we walked a wide track through scrub forest leading to the Vale da Bencao. This gave us a chance to see species that were unlikely or harder to encounter in the Pantanal, such as Blue Dacnis, Swallow Tanager, Flame-crested Tanager, Masked Tityra, Thick-billed Euphonias, White-bellied Warbler, Buff-throated Saltator, Yellow-tufted Woodpecker, Grey-headed

Tanager, Streaked Xenops, Amazonian Motmot (*right*), and a Streaked Flycatcher with a cicada. A usually shy Undulated Tinamou was spotted walking quickly across the track. We reveled in an uncommon sighting of the aptly-named Sharp-tailed Stream-creeper foraging in stream shallows, and wonderful close views of Buff-throated Woodcreeper and Rufous-tailed Jacamar.

By the end of our first day, we'd ticked a nice assortment of Chapada specialties, and were excited about adventures awaiting us.



Day 2 / Sept 2 - Chapada dos Guimaraes; Pantanal

The morning dawned cool and windy, with a front that dropped temperatures into the mid-60's. We bundled up and began birding the Chapada along the Geladeira Waterfall road, walking various sections of scrub cerrado. Despite windy conditions, we quickly picked up specialties including Black-faced, White-banded, Burnished-

buff, and White-rumped Tanagers which sounded like duetting honeros. A female Horned Sungem, a species of hummingbird that can claim to have the most wingbeats per second at 90, perched for excellent scope views, and White-eared Puffbird (*right*) and Black-throated Saltators alighted in the open to sing. Noisy Curl-crested Jays could be seen moving from tree to tree as a pair of Red-and-Green Macaws flew by. Smaller birds included Red-crested Finch, Plain-crowned Slaty Antshrike, Plumbeous Seedeater, Plain-crested Elaenia, and a calling Spot-backed Puffbird. A pair of Burrowing Owls exited their home in a red sandbank to observe us observing them.



We departed the Chadapa region leaving the cerrado habitat behind and continued south to the gateway of the Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetlands. After another delicious lunch, this time at the Churrascaria in Pocone, we embarked upon the famed Transpantaneira, a 150km dirt and gravel road that crosses a vast floodplain teeming with birds and wildlife for us to discover.

We savored the journey with many stops to ogle a multitude of avian activity. We lost count of the number of bridges spanning water pools that attracted waders, raptors, terns, as well as caiman and capybaras (the world's largest rodent) too.

By the end of the day we had seen all the possible storks - Maguari, Wood and Jabiru - and all the ibis and spoonbills, including the least likely in northern Pantanal, the White-faced Ibis. We'd enjoyed all the possible herons too, including Whistling and Capped, that did not require a boat ride!



Raptor highlights soared with great views of Black-collared, Savanna and Roadside Hawks, Yellow-headed and Southern Caracaras, and Snail Kites which have an infinity to catching crabs in this wetland. The tall and stately Red-legged Seriema stalked open grasslands, while two dozen day-old chicks followed a Greater Rhea (*left*), South America's largest bird. Bare-faced Curassow and Chaco Chachalacas provided steady enjoyment with interesting plumages and ongoing activity. The parrot family was represented by Yellow-chevroned, Peach-fronted and Monk Parakeet along with Blue-fronted Amazons. Single sightings included Squirrel Cuckoo, White-rumped Monjita, Greater Ani and the stunning Scarlet-headed Blackbird. An uncommon encounter with Barn and Cliff Swallows was likely due to the change in weather - the cold front!

We ended the day 42 kms down the Transpantaneira, and countless moments of joy, excitement and discovery of the wonders of the Pantanal. We spent the night at Pousada Rio Claro, relaxing over delicious Brazilian cuisine and the day's great experiences.

Day 3 / Sept 3 - Pantanal: Rio Claro

We began birding before breakfast around the lush grounds of the Pousada Rio Claro. Multiple feeders attracted Chestnut-bellied Guan, Chaco Chachalaca and Bare-faced Curassow, along with Yellow-billed Cardinal, Unicoloured Blackbird, Saffron Finch, Grayish Baywing and Nanday Parakeets. Colorful birds jumped and flew through surrounding trees - Yellow-rumped Cacique, Peach-fronted and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets,

Crested Oropendola, Scaly-headed Parrot, Campo Flicker, and Gray-fronted Dove. Glittering-throated Emeralds, the most common of a handful of hummingbird species, flitted along woodland edges.

Energized after breakfast, we spent the remainder of the morning walking the edge of a now-dry remnant gallery forest, and the lodge road connecting to the Transpantaneira. We enjoyed excellent views of Chestnut-vented Conebill, Hooded Tanager, Masked Gnatcatcher, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Rusty-backed Antwren, White-wedged Piculet, Little Woodpecker, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Black-fronted Nunbird, Golden-green Woodpecker, Long-tailed Ground-dove, Rufous-fronted and Greater Thornbirds. Flycatchers included Rufous Casiornis, Forest Elaenia, Yellow-olive, Brown-crested, Fuscous and Short-crested Flycatcher. Mammals are always a treat, and we delighted to see Azara's Capuchin, South American Coati, Marsh Deer and a brief look at a Giant Anteater.



Boat rides in the Pantanal provide a unique and exciting perspective on the world's largest wetlands, sustained by wide flowing rivers teeming with wildlife. We embarked on our first of several waterway excursions, a 3-hour tour on the Rio Claro. Our boat glided by all five of the possible kingfishers - American Pygmy, Green, Green and Rufous (*left*), Amazon, and Ringed Kingfishers. We witnessed an Agami Heron catch and quickly swallow a large fish, before a nearby Cooi Heron could steal its meal. A Sungrebe lurked in the shadows, while Yellow-collared Macaws showed brilliantly on perches and in flight. At the edge of the forest, we coaxed-out sightings of pairs of Rusty-backed Spinetails and Band-tailed Antbirds. The return ride at dusk provided magical moments watching a number of Band-tailed Nighthawks take flight and swoop over the water.

Day 4 / Sept 4 - Pantanal: Rio Claro & Mato Grosso

At sunrise, I happened to look out my room and catch Crab-eating Foxes prowling around the Rio Claro Lodge; I laughed at the sight of a Yellow-headed Caracara standing on the back of a Capybara - that's a big bird! Kitty had awoken even earlier, and was taking a quiet walk on the grounds. She returns to find me, exclaiming that she'd heard an animal roaring nearby. Could it have been a jaguar? We all went out to look, but couldn't find a trace. Fischer, our guide, mused it was quite possibly a Jaguar, as one had recently killed a cow in the area. Kitty had quite a story to tell friends at home! Red-crested Cardinals were a new addition to the now-familiar feeder birds.

We bid farewell to our hosts, and headed back out to the Transpantaneira, encountering Blue-fronted Amazons along the way. Along the 'highway' we stopped frequently to enjoy a great variety of avian activity - a family of Jabiru storks atop their huge nest (*right*), a Yellowish Pipit in flight display, Great Rufous Woodcreeper, Buff-breasted Wren, Bat Falcon, White-tailed Hawk, a Great Black Hawk eating a fish, and Black-collared Hawk on a nest with a couple of chicks. Next to just about every bridge - and there were many - a multitude of Caiman basked partially-submerged around pond edges. Mammals stayed alert while foraging, including Azara's Agouti, South American Coati, Gray Brocket Deer and Marsh Deer.



By late morning we reached the Mato Grosso Hotel on the Pixiam River, 17 kms south of the Rio Claro. We were immediately drawn to the activity around the feeders by a calling Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. Chestnut-eared Aracari and Purplish Jays were joined by a Azara's Capuchin, all enjoying various fruits on offer. Orange-backed Troupial, Grayish Baywing, Shiny Cowbird, White-tipped Dove, Saffron Finch and Yellow-billed Cardinals were enticed by the seed and grains. A pair of Mato Grosso Antbirds flitted near the edge of the gallery forest.

We spent the remainder of the afternoon relaxing on the waters of the Pixaim River, lulled by a leisurely boat ride. Black-collared and Great Black Hawks circled overhead, while Ringed and Amazon Kingfisher perched patiently - all waiting for our boatman to toss a fish their way! Our luck with kingfishers continued as an American Pygmy Kingfisher posed for close viewing. A Red-throated Piping Guan was spotted high up a tree, but we got closer to a Blue-throated Piping Guan eating fruit from a Jenipapo tree. A short walk into the gallery forest revealed a well-camouflaged Great Potoo in its characteristic pose, facing up from a thick branch. Boat-billed Heron (*right*) showed well, but Zig-zag Heron - the toughest one to find - was only heard as darkness descended. After dinner Leo called us out of our rooms to watch a Tapir that was feeding in the wet basin.



Day 5 / Sept 5 - Pantanal: Mato Grosso; Transpantaneira & Cuiaba River

A little after daybreak, we were out along a nearby airfield strip, being watched by several inquisitive Marsh Deer as mist rose from the field. Distant Black-and-gold Howler monkeys added eerie, early-morning sounds. Two Russet-crowned Crakes caught our attention when dashing across the track. Diminutive Mouse-colored Tyrannulet and Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant flitted around a shrub, while Russet-collared Seedeater foraged among grasses. We enjoyed good looks at Green-backed Becard, Great Antshrike, Rusty-backed Antwrens and Rufous Cachalotes. All this before breakfast!

Once again, we set out on the Transpantaneira, travelling all the way to Porto Jofre, the end of the 150 km "highway" through the Pantanal. Our journey was marked by multiple stops along the way to discover wildlife of lush habitats. In one grove of open shade trees we found Creamy-bellied Thrushes, Great Horned Owls (potentially to be split), Common Tody Flycatcher, Barred Antshrike, Pale-legged Hornero, Ashy-headed Greenlet, Gilded Hummingbird, White-bellied Tyrannulet and Orange-headed Tanager. White-headed Marsh-Tyrant flitted in vegetation that shadowed Double-collared Seedeaters on the ground below. An earth-toned Little Cuckoo showed nicely. Southern Screamers and Maguari Storks stalked adjacent marshes, where insect-eater hirundines swirled overhead - Brown-chested and Gray-breasted Martin, White-winged and White-rumped Swallows.

By late morning we arrived at Porto Jofre and swapped our mini-van for a speed boat. After 20 minutes on the Cuiaba River, the Jacare (House) Boat came into view, moored on the Piquiri River. This unique accommodation would be our base for the next two nights, facilitating an intimate river experience.

After lunch, our speed boat took us further up the Cuiaba River towards the Three Brothers River. Caiman and Capybara lined the river banks, paying us little attention. We added Pied Lapwing, Yellow-billed Tern, Straight-billed Woodcreeper and White-banded Mockingbird to our bird list. This area is among the best spots to find Jaguar, and we were soon rewarded with impressive views of a huge male just a few meters away, resting on a bank along the Little Bay. For over an hour we watched the big cat swatting flies, turning over, looking at us, stretching, taking a cat nap, yawning, getting up, and walking a short distance to lay down in another spot. We were absorbed in its every move, and thrilled with this first experience of Jaguar in the Pantanal!



Returning back to the Jacare at dusk, we watched a multitude of Greater and Lesser Fishing Bats feeding low over the water (hence the fishing part of their name). A number of Band-tailed Nighthawks hawked insects higher up in the air. The waterway lulled us to sleep on the house boat, our dreams filled with amazing memories of the day.

Day 6 / Sept 6 - Jacare Boat: Cuiaba & Three Brothers Rivers

Sleeping in a house boat on the river proved wonderfully relaxing. With cheerful anticipation we embarked on our morning boat ride up the Cuiaba River, veering onto the Old River. Along the way we stopped to look at an immature male Black-and Gold Howler monkey and Cinereous-breasted Spinetail on the shoreline. We studied a family of Black Skimmers, noting different bill sizes and shapes between adults and chicks.

For an hour we followed five Giant Otters as they hunted along the Black Bay around various patches of water hyacinth and grass mats. Catfish seemed to be easy catching, and the otters ate their meals leisurely on logs, though always alert to potential danger.

Seeing a pair of Brazilian Porcupines (*right*) asleep high in an open biueiro tree was an unexpected but delightful surprise. We enjoyed good views of Squirrel Cuckoo, Orange-headed Tanager, Red-billed Scythebill, Black-fronted Nunbird, and Rufous-browed Pepper-shrike. Our second Jaguar of the trip (the first seen yesterday), was a beautiful male, asleep in a shady bank of the Three Brothers River. Our excellent morning ended watching a family of Capybaras - a male with three females and three youngsters that appeared to be 1-2 months old; two suckled from their mother.



We scrambled to start the afternoon boat ride a little early, on word that a mother Jaguar was spotted with a cub along the Three Brothers River. We found the two of them resting in a shady river bank spot. The mother seemed to be asleep while the cub moved more restlessly, lifting its head and looking at us. Not far away we saw another Jaguar, a female on the Black Bay, once again resting in the deep shade and partially obscured by a curtain of vines. Three boat trips and sightings on each one brought us a total of 5 Jaguars so far!

We returned to the porcupines site, and saw three animals, with one showing its long prehensile tail in full view. Our wonderful day ended with a Fawn-breasted Wren and Crane Hawk flying to roost.

Day 7 / Sept 7 - Jacare Boat: Cuiaba River; Porto Jofre



Our last boat ride based out of the Jacare (House) Boat did not disappoint this morning. We just missed the Jaguar on the Three Brothers, but enjoyed two separate Jaguar sightings along the Cuiaba River. First was a female stalking the river's edge, moving in and out of the vegetation, peering into patches of hyacinth, hunting for caiman. She disappeared from view, but we eventually relocated her further down the river where she took a break from the hunt and sat down on the sandy river bank. The second Jaguar was a lone male seen briefly before vanishing into a denser part of forest.

We encountered another family of otters preening and effortlessly catching fish below overhanging vegetation. We enjoyed their inquisitive, noisy growls and eerie screams of clan communication.

We took a break from watching carnivores to call-in a lively flock of birds attracted to our pygmy owl imitation. The mix including Plain, Southern Beardless and White-bellied Tyrannulets, Lesser Seed-Finch, Rusty-backed and White-lored Spinetails, Olivaceous and Straight-billed Woodcreepers, Grey-headed Tanager, Green-backed Becard, Glittering-throated Emerald, Ashy-headed Greenlet and Fuscous Flycatcher.

Back on the Jacare we checked out, said our goodbyes to the staff, and made the twenty minute boat journey back to Porto Jofre, where we checked into the Hotel Pantanal Norte for the next 2 nights. Hyacinth Macaws squawked their greeting.

We spent the afternoon exploring a short distance up the Transpantaneira road from Porto Jofre. A walk into the forest produced Fawn-breasted Wren, Large-billed Antwren, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, a confiding Dull-capped (White-eyed) Attila and Grey-headed Tanager. Undulated Tinamou continuously called about 25 meters away, heard but not seen. A male Band-tailed Manakin provided no more than short glimpses. In wetlands, Ash-throated Crake and Gray-breasted Crake vocalized close to us but never showed, while a Yellow-browed Tyrant, an austral migrant, was a stunning sight.

Day 8 / Sept 8 - Porto Jofre: Cuiaba & Three Brothers Rivers

Boat rides continued from Porto Jofre, and this morning's glide along the Cuiaba and Three Brothers Rivers was magical. For over 3 hours we enjoyed four encounters with Jaguars, resulting in amazing sightings of 5 separate individuals!



Our first Jaguar was a female crouching in the grasses, eyeing a caiman in the water. She came into view to stalk through aquatic vegetation, intent on her prey. The second cat, another female, walked in and out of shrubbery, descended the river bank to cross a sandy beach, then swam a stretch of river before returning to a path along the bank. We moved on to watch two jaguars, young brothers, resting on a sand bank. Word got out and boats soon stacked up to admire these beautiful animals relaxing in the sun. One retreated into a thicket while his brother watched us watching him.



We observed our fifth Jaguar of the morning, an older male, stalking a Capybara that was fully aware of its position. The large rodent barked alarm calls as the jaguar circled around it.

While the Jaguars were captivating, we found time to admire birds on an extensive area of mudflats including Black-bellied Whistling Duck, White-rumped Sandpipers, Bare-faced Ibis, Collared Plover with day-old chicks, Pied Lapwing (*left*), two Yellowish Pipits, and a distant yellowlegs species. Cream-colored Woodpecker was heard, and better views were required of a flock of White-browed Meadowlarks.

After extraordinary luck with with a dozen Jaguar sightings in 5 boat rides, we opted to head downstream to the Little Black Channel this afternoon,

knowing big cats would not likely be spotted. We enjoyed a slow cruise along the waterway, absorbing the wildlife and landscape all to ourselves. We were delighted to find a group of about 30 Nacunda Nighthawks roosting on the open ground in blazing sun; these large nighthawks have white bellies designed to deflect heat. Azara's Capuchins and Black-and-gold Howler monkeys were seen feeding in the canopy. The edge of the gallery forest held a multitude of Cocoi Heron, Striated Heron, Anhinga and Neotropic Cormorants as well as an Osprey. Mato Grosso Antbirds and an immature male Helmeted Manakin were seen along with Blue-throated Piping-Guan.

We enjoyed watching another family of Giant Otters (*below*) including 3 youngsters preening and playing on a log. Before exiting the channel we had good looks at a Greater Ani, Boat-billed Heron and female Sungrebe. The sky glowed a brilliant deep red as our boat returned back to the Pantanal Norte at dusk. Greater Fishing Bats and Band-tailed Nighthawks skimmed low over the water hawking insects. It was a magical end to our last boat ride in the Pantanal.



Day 9 / Sept 9 - Transpantaneira

We spent our final morning in Porto Jofre, birding the grounds around our hotel, the Pantanal Norte. We found a female Black-throated Mango on a nest, a couple pairs of Hyacinth Macaws inspecting nest cavities, a brilliant adult White-browed Meadowlark, Screaming Cowbird, Streaked Flycatcher and a fly-over White Woodpecker. Wattled Jacanas stepped lightly on giant water lily pads, barely disturbing floating vegetation in the pond. Fresh fruit on the hotel feeders attracted a horde of hungry birds, including Toco Toucans (*below*), Palm Tanagers, Guira Cuckoo, Giant Cowbird, Grayish Saltator, Purplish Jay, Greater Kiskadee, and Yellow-billed Cardinal, the most common bird in the Pantanal.



Departing Porto Jofre, we journeyed 135 kms, almost the full length of the Transpantaneira. Before reaching our destination, the Pousada Piuval at the north end of the Pantanal, we stopped several times for birds, bats, mammals, snakes, and a tarantula, too! We saw Subtropical Doradito and Least Bittern (both potential splits), a mixed group of Double-collared, White-bellied and Rusty-collared Seedeaters, a Crane Hawk harassed by kiskadees, and brilliant Scarlet-headed Blackbirds. We glimpsed a 6-foot Yellow Anaconda as it slithered quickly across the road and vanished into grasses. A section of dry forest was quiet except for a Lined Woodpecker and Great Potoo, along with a small, active colony of Greater Spear-nosed Bats, and one Tarantula.

A mid-day sighting of a Giant Anteater (*right*) strolling through a pasture drew a crowd of onlookers, as people stopped their cars to watch the animal lumber along a fence line before moving away from the road. We admired a beautiful Sunbittern, watched a Jabiru catch a fish, and saw Green, Plumbeous and Bare-faced Ibis hunting in a hyacinth-filled ditch - all seemingly oblivious to the afternoon heat.



The Transpantaneira showcased the iconic Pantanal scene with hundreds of Great Egrets, a number of Snowy and Cattle Egrets, Jabirus and a few Roseate Spoonbills stalking pools lined by water hyacinth. Dozens of Large-billed Terns flew up and down waterways dotted with lazing Caiman and Capybara on the edges.

We reached the Pousada Piuval as sunset bathed the landscape in beautiful colors. A family of Gray-brocket Deer and a Crab-eating Fox emerged at dusk, to welcome us.

Day 10 / Sept 10 - Pousada Piuval

We went out before breakfast to beat the tropical heat and explore a nearby patch of forest. Avian activity highlighted plenty of species, including a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Green-barred Woodpecker, Collared Forest Falcon, Black-tailed Tityra, Boat-billed Flycatcher and our target pair of uncommon (for the Pantanal) White-fronted Woodpeckers. Walking back a Gray Monjita was perched on a termite mound while White-eyed Parakeets, Chopi Blackbird, Campo Flicker, and Blue-and-yellow Macaw flitted around the Pousada grounds. A number of American Golden Plovers, an uncommon migrant, were wandering behind the swimming pool.



After breakfast we drove to the edge of the dry forest, then walked a sandy track to find Planalto Slaty Antshrike and Black-bellied Antwren. Leo looked up and caught sight of a Great Potoo just above his head, perched on a branch overhanging the track. Also seen were a pair of White-lined Tanagers, Rusty-fronted and Pearly-vented Tody Flycatcher, Sooty-fronted Spinetail, and a Bat Falcon. A Rufous-sided Crake was heard only. A few Azara's Capuchin's (*left*) scampered amongst the trees, while a confiding Black-and-white Tegu Lizard allowed for close approach.

Following the mid-afternoon heat, when temperatures reached more than 100-degrees F, we boarded the Pousada's open safari vehicle for a bumpy, dusty ride out to the fringes of the ranch. We enjoyed watching a Yellow-headed Caracara flush a dozen American Golden Plovers. Caiman lined the banks of a creek where many Black-crowned Night-Herons congregated with a Boat-billed Heron on a nest, a colony of Wood Storks, and many Black Vultures. We saw two Yellowish Pipits moving through short grasses, followed by a Cream-colored Woodpecker and Orange-winged Parrots on a woodland edge. On the return journey in darkness, spotlights revealed several nocturnal creatures - many Pauraques, two Common Potos, Gray Brocket Deer, and Crab-eating Fox.

Day 11 / Sept 11 - Pousada Piuval



Sunrise was announced by the loud screams of Red-legged Seriemas echoing across the ranch lands. Birds were busy getting breakfast, including one immature Rufescent Tiger-Heron (*left*) that had caught a small Caiman and was struggling to swallow it! The Blue-and-yellow Macaw of dubious origin was taking up residence in an old broken palm tree by the swimming pool. Walking in a pasture dotted with cone-shaped termite mounds we found a pair of Suriri Flycatchers and got the briefest looks at a female Blue-tufted Starthroat. Along a section of forest track, we ogled a number of species moving in a mixed flock, including White-lored Spinetail, Plain Tyrannulet, Large-billed Antwren, Planalto Slaty Antshrike, Olivaceous and Narrow-billed

Woodcreepers, Chestnut-vented Conebill, Tropical Parula, White-wedged Piculet, and Little Woodpecker. A little farther along we enjoyed great views of Sepia-capped Flycatcher and Blue-crowned Trogon.

The afternoon session took us towards the "Baia Piuval" an expansive lake that fills or recedes with seasonal rains. Along the way, a flock of 14 Guira Cuckoos (*right*) feeding in unison on the ground caught our attention, along with Chestnut-bellied Guans and a Black-fronted Nunbird. We watched four Undulated Tinamous chasing each other before deciding to cautiously cross the track, one by one. The first two made it without issue, while the third one narrowly escaped after a Southern Caracara swooped in! The bay was too low for a boat ride, but we crossed a long narrow boardwalk on foot to explore an upland area and climb an aging wooden tower. An inspiring view from the top, highlighted the now-familiar assortment of Pantanal waders. A Striped Cuckoo was seen well near the base of the tower. In the open forest, we saw Howler Monkeys and Azara's Agouti, and watched several bat species leaving tree cavities by the boardwalk.



On our way back to the Pousada for dinner, we stopped for outstanding views of a Black-banded Owl - an excellent ending to our last full day in the Pantanal!

Day 12 / Sept 12 - Piuval to Cuiaba

Our last morning began shortly after daybreak, taking a different track towards the Baia Piuval. Birding was very good, with views of Black-bellied and Large-billed Antwrens, Pearly-vented and Rusty-fronted Tody-Flycatchers, Chestnut-vented Conebill, Fork-tailed Wood-nymph, and Orange-winged Parrot. We were delighted for strong showings of Saffron-billed Sparrow and Flavescent Warbler, two species that we'd previously just glimpsed.

Where the bay met the forest, two Collared Forest Falcons called to each other, and a Bat Falcon chased a Toco Toucan. We picked out four Azure Gallinules and a juvenile Purple Gallinule amongst water hyacinths. Walking back to the van, we were thrilled to see fresh male Jaguar footprints, likely from that morning. We ended our time at Piuval with a pair of Black-tailed Marmosets scurrying about branches on an open tree.

After saying good-bye to our friends at the Pousada Piuval, we made one last stop on the way to Cuiaba airport, pausing at the edge of a field to admire three very confiding Streamer-tailed Tyrants dart over our heads along the roadside. This lovely bird provided a fitting end to an outstanding trip in the Pantanal.

