

Brazil Pantanal

21 June–2 July 2016

Participants

Vaughan and Sveta Ashby

Clive and Janet Dickson

Bill Dixon

Dave Garnett

Jim Hamilton

Adrian Jaques

Geoff Keen



Greater Rhea

Leaders Raphael Santos and Andy Foster

Day 1 Overnight flight from London via Zurich to Sao Paulo

Day 2 Arrival in Sao Paul and transfer from international terminal to domestic terminal. Normally this would have been straight forward as it is only a 15-minute walk but with the GOL domestic flight booking still needing to be confirmed as their system had broken down it proved quite eventful! We boarded the internal flight eventually and arrived on time at 11.00 in Cuiaba where Andy and Raphael, the guides for the tour, were waiting in arrivals. We met our excellent driver and settled into our large comfortable minibus for the short drive over to the hotel where we were to spend our first night. After checking in, we quickly went to our rooms and met up again shortly afterwards for a quick bite to eat at the Subway sandwich bar, the only 'fast food' of the tour as we needed to be quick. We met up again at 14.30 and took a 25-minute drive to an area just outside of town called Bom Sucesso, a small fishing community with various areas of scrub and small patches of forest. This afternoon's birding trip was supposed to be a warm up (!) and thankfully turned out to be really quite productive. It was however, a surprisingly cool afternoon with a maximum temperature of 20 degrees centigrade, very cool for Cuiaba! We soon picked up our first common species from the minibus that included Cattle and Snowy Egrets, Southern Caracara, Savanna Hawk and Yellow-chevrons Parakeet. We soon had our first proper stop and Raphael quickly had us onto various species of birds including Capped Heron, Rufescent Tiger-heron, Wattled Jacana, Versicoloured Emerald, Greyish Saltator, Buff-throated Saltator, Red-shouldered Macaw, Chaco Chachalaca, Wood Stork, Common Tody-flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cardinal, fantastic views of a Red-billed Scythebill, a pair of Rufous Cachalotes, a rather nice pair of Great Antshrikes, Barred Antshrike, Buff-breasted Wren, Masked Gnatcatcher and Red-crested Finch. We drove on a little further to our final stop which was a small track that ran down into a patch of forest,

Raphael played Ferruginous Pygmy-owl and soon had lots of birds around us including a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl! Cinnamon-throated Hermit, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Moustached Wren and Grey-headed Tanager were all seen before we continued on down the track and came to a semi-open area where we managed to get great views of Black-fronted Nunbird, a nice male White-wedged Piculet, Toco Toucan, a pair of Thrush-like Wrens and Silver-beaked Tanager. After a very productive couple of hours we boarded our minibus again and took the short drive back into Cuiaba arriving at the hotel at 18.00. After a brief break we headed out to a churrascaria for dinner. A churrascaria is a typical Brazilian restaurant with a large salad bar and waiters continually walking around with rather large lumps of various meats on big skewers that they keep offering you. As you want, they slice a piece (or pieces) off onto your plate for you to consume; after several visits from these guys you really feel like you probably shouldn't eat anymore... but you do! Having had a very long day this was the perfect way to round it off before heading back to the hotel, completing our first daily checklist and then heading off to bed.

Day 3 After a good night's sleep we met up in the breakfast room of our hotel at 06.00, spent half an hour eating lots of fresh fruit, cheese breads, coffee and cake, loaded the rest of our luggage onto the minibus and by 07.00 we were on our way to our next destination of Serra das Araras. We picked up two Greater Rheas from the minibus together with Chopi Blackbirds and two Red-legged Seriemas for some. After a drive of 2.5 hours we spotted some King Vultures perched up in a large tree by the roadside. We found a safe place to stop, pulled over and hopped out to photograph them. Almost immediately they took off but gave great flight views and good opportunities for photos. We also picked up Ringed Kingfisher, Snail Kite, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Black-collared, Crane and White-tailed Hawks, Snowy Egret and Wattled Jacana. After a further 20 minutes of driving we arrived at our next destination of Pousada Currupira, Serra das Araras. An interesting little place located by the side of a quarry but with a good mixture of habitats as this is the transitional zone between the Amazon rain forest and the Cerrado habitat. This place is on the map due to the high chances of seeing Harpy Eagle, unfortunately there have been no sightings for just over 10 months, and although we had great views of the nest (!), unfortunately there were no Harpy Eagles on or anywhere near it. Whilst birding in close proximity to the nest we did however, pick up Scaled Dove, Blue-crowned Trogon, several Brown Jacamars, Swallow-winged and White-eared Puffbirds, Yellow-tufted and Little Woodpeckers, Masked Tityra and a lovely male Helmeted Manakin. On the drive back to the Lodge we also picked up both Buff-necked and Green Ibis. After a late lunch we met up again at 15.00 and birded a little around the Lodge picking up a nice male Black-throated Mango and Guira Cuckoos. After this we took a short drive to a different area where we were to take a short trail into the forest. On the drive to the trail head we stopped and had distant but good views of two Southern Screamers, several Brazilian Teals, Ash-throated Crake, two beautiful Red-and-green Macaws, Dusky-headed Parrot, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Burrowing Owl, Sick's Swift, Gilded Hummingbird, Black-throated Saltator and Raphael used playback to get us cracking views of Rusty-backed Antwren. Once on the small forested trail it was fairly quiet but we did pick up views of Black-fronted Nunbird and a female Band-tailed Manakin. We came back out of the forest by 17.15 and waited for nightfall by 17.50 and then started to use playback for some owls. We did manage to pick up flight views of Common Pauraque and then after a short while we had response from a Spectacled Owl, we used playback and distant but really great views of this wonderful bird. It was shortly joined by another and then one flew straight towards and over us, gliding on its big broad wings, a great moment! We headed back to the Lodge, used the bathroom and then headed back out to try for Black-banded Owl; unfortunately this didn't respond but we did get a vocal response from a Tawny-bellied Screech-owl and also got great photos of a female Common Pauraque sitting on a small termite mound! Time passed fast and before we knew it, it was already 20.30, so we headed back to the Lodge for dinner, this was followed by our daily check list and we all retired after a long but great days birding at 22.00.

Day 4 After a good night's sleep we met up in the dining area at 05.30 for a quick cup of coffee and some biscuits before heading out onto one of the forest trails. After a 10-minute drive we got off of the minibus and started birding the track that runs through the forest. It was cold this morning so bird activity was slow but as

the sun came up the bird activity increased and after a lot of effort we had a good few hours birding. Highlights from the morning included Red-and-green Macaw, Dusky-headed Parrot, Cinnamon-throated Hermit, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Gilded Hummingbird, Black-tailed Trogon, Black-fronted Nunbird, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Red-billed Scythebill, Layard's Woodcreeper, Great Antshrike, some very skulky Black-throated Antbirds, White-backed Fire-eye, Short-tailed Pygmy-tyrant, White-lined Tanager and Rusty-fronted Tody-flycatchers. We returned to the Lodge rather later than expected at 10.00 rather than our planned return of 08.30! We had breakfast, packed up and just before our departure at 11.00 we had great views of a perched Hook-billed Kite just outside the lodge! We set off and picked up a Greater Rhea (not literally!) running into the forest and then hit the main road back towards Cuiaba. By 13.15 we had arrived back in Cuiaba and continued our journey onto a small town called Pocone, a curious little town that seems to be made up of lots of little roads and about 50 town squares! This is also famous as being the entrance route into the Pantanal and the Transpantaneira Road. We stopped quickly to re-fuel and by 14.15 we were all sat down in another BBQ style restaurant having some lunch. After an hour of feasting we set off onto the Transpantaneira Road. As soon as we hit the Transpantaneira road it was chaos! So many birds everywhere it was quite frustrating not being able to stop for everything, but these were mostly common birds that we would see lots of over the next five days. Highlights were many and included a pair of Bare-faced Curassows, many Chaco Chachalacas, Cocoli, Little Blue and Whistling Herons, two Plumbeous Ibis, Bare-faced Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Jabiru, 100s of Snail Kites, Black-collared Hawk, Black-necked Stilt, Large-billed Tern, Monk and Peach-fronted Parakeets, White-rumped Monjita, Chestnut-vented Conebill, Grassland Sparrow, Unicoloured Blackbird and Rusty-collared Seedeater. As the sun started to go down and dusk was close we had well over 80 Nacunda Nighthawks flying over, a fantastic sight and very challenging for photos in such poor light! We needn't have worried however, as better opportunities came later! As darkness approached we set up the flashlight from the minibus and started to scan for anything along the road, hoping to pick up a Giant Anteater, but it wasn't meant to be! Having travelled 70km down the road (which was pretty bumpy and dusty) we arrived at our next hotel, the Hotel Pantanal Mato Grosso, which is located on the Pixaim River, a rather beautiful spot! Our friendly and faithful driver Pepito had done a great job getting us here safely and we quickly unloaded our bags and checked in. The staff here are very helpful indeed, check in was very smooth and within minutes everybody had gone to their rooms with even time for a shower before dinner, albeit a rather quick one! We met up at 19.30 for dinner, followed by our daily checklist and then off to bed with another early start tomorrow morning!

Day 5 We met up at 05.30 in the dining room for coffee and biscuits before setting off on our first boat ride along the Pixaim River at 06.00. It was a lovely clear morning and we saw some great birds. We were on the boat for about 2.5 hours, highlights included both Red and Blue-throated Piping-guans, 30+ Boat-billed Herons, Roseate Spoonbill, Sungrebe, Sunbittern, two very distant Hyacinth Macaws, Turquoise-fronted Parrot, Orange-winged Parrot, Rusty-backed Spinetail, Band-tailed Antbird, Yellow-rumped Cacique and Black-crowned Tityra. We were also lucky enough to get good looks at Giant River Otter. We returned to the lodge for breakfast and then headed straight back out onto a trail that runs from the back of the hotel and follows the edge of the river. We first passed through an open area and got good views of Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, 20+ Golden-collared Macaws and an Orange-backed Troupial. We continued into the forest and picked up Rufous-tailed Jacamar, White-lored Spinetail, Mato Grosso Antbird, Large-billed Wren, Pale-legged Hornero, female Helmeted Manakin, Ashy-headed Greenlet and on the way back a pair of Chotoy Spinetails. We had a short break before lunch, packed up everything and set off back along the Transpantaneira road at 13.30 for our 80 km journey to Porto Jofre. Our timing was perfect today, a good mornings birding followed by a long drive during the heat of the day. It was rather hot so we drove with just a couple of stops to pick up Scarlet-headed Blackbird, Rufous Casiornis, Lineated Woodpecker, Bare-faced Curassow, Fawn-breasted Wren, and Greater Thornbird. At about 17.00 we had another scheduled stop where we got good views of Cinereous-breasted and Yellow-chinned Spinetails, Great Black-hawk, Black-backed Water-tyrant and White-headed Marsh-tyrant. It was now beginning to get dark and the first Nacunda Nighthawks were beginning to appear. Jim had seen an owl whilst we were off chasing a couple of Chotoy

Spinetails, so we went back to an area that had some mature trees in and started to scan. Suddenly Great-horned Owl called above us, we all scanned for several minutes until Raphael picked up a Great-horned Owl sitting high up in a tree, it was a silhouette but a great one showing its long ear tufts! Very happy with ourselves we boarded the minibus again and made our way towards Porto Jofre. En-route we managed to see 20+ Band-tailed Nighthawks and Raphael managed to pick up several Spot-tailed Nightjars one of which Vaughan put it in the scope to give us all great views of this rather cool bird! It was now 18.30 so we got Pepito to put his foot down and by 18.50 we arrived at the Hotel in Porto Jofre... and what a lovely hotel it is too! We were quickly shown to our rooms, showered and met up for dinner at 19.30, followed by the daily checklist and briefing for the next day's birding adventure!

Day 6 After another good night's sleep we were woken by the sound of Chaco Chachalacas and all met in the dining room at 05.30 for breakfast. The plan for this morning was to spend some time birding the main Cuiaba River at Porto Jofre and make our way down to a specific area where we stood a higher chance of seeing Jaguars, the Black Stream and the Three Brothers River. We had two boats between us so had plenty of room and all had a seat at the side which made it much easier for birding and photo opportunities. We set off at high speed to cover some distance as the sun rose. It was a beautiful morning and hopes were high of seeing Jaguar! As we sped along the river there were plenty of the now common birds including Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, Anhingas, Great Egrets, Cocoi Herons with the odd Jabiru thrown in for good measure! We soon came to our first sandy island that had appeared as the water levels at this time of year start to drop rapidly. Here we got great views of our first Black Skimmer, Collared Plover and Pied Lapwing. This was shortly followed by great views of Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns. We had distant views of Orange-winged Parrots as they flew over high and also some Monk Parakeets. We stopped at one spot and had 40+ White-browed Blackbirds and also tried for a Grey-breasted Crake in the same area, although it responded well and came close, unfortunately it did not show. We continued on and picked up a back end view of Greater Ani as it disappeared into the undergrowth. Further along the river and suddenly got a call through on the radio that a Jaguar had been spotted about 15 minutes away, our boat pilot Jose told us to hold on tight, gave it lots of throttle and away we sped! After about 15 minutes we turned a corner to be confronted by another 10 boats.... clearly all there for the same reason! We scanned the bank of the river and our first boat had brief views of the Jaguar walking away in the grass but nothing for the second boat. We waited and waited with tension in the air then suddenly there was a movement in the bushes...it was a Jaguar! We waited patiently for it to walk along to a clearing, and sure enough it did! It came out onto a piece of sand right in front of us...fantastic views!! After photos were taken we moved on and got back to some birding! It was fairly quiet as it was now quite hot, we stopped on a small island for a quick bathroom break, and then tried for a Yellow-breasted Flycatcher but it was too far away to respond. We started heading back to the lodge and went up a little side stream and had four Giant River Otters, happily feasting away on fish, great views and great photos! We watched the otters for about 15 minutes and then continued back towards the lodge. During the morning we also saw Black-backed Water-tyrant, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Rusty-collared Seedeater, Toco Toucan, Little Woodpecker, White-winged Swallows, Silver-beaked Tanager, Yellow-billed Cardinals, Crested Oropendola and Sveta picked up a female Red-crested Finch. We arrived back at the Lodge at 11.45 and, after getting off of the boats, we were lucky enough to come across a guy who had just picked up a Yellow Python. It had apparently been bought in by some fishermen. We all had great looks before it was taken to a safe area within the lodge grounds. We all then met again for lunch at 12.30. The food at this hotel is great, with lots of choices it's difficult not to pile on the pounds! After lunch we had a short break; this being a good opportunity to catch up with the Hyacinth Macaws that are resident in the gardens of the lodge! There were also Buff-necked Ibis, Wood Storks, and Southern Screamers at close hand to get good photos of. The most amazing sight was a number of Nacunda Nighthawks roosting on the ground totally in the open. Although at first they flew, several remained allowing 'crippling' photographic opportunities. We all met up again at 14.45 with six of the group decided that they wanted to go out on the boats again to try to get better photos of Jaguar and to go birding from the boats, whilst three others decided to bird with Raphael around the lodge grounds. It was a great afternoon, not even 10 minutes after leaving the

jetty Jose spotted a Jaguar on the river bank, it was perfect conditions with the sun in the right direction and the Jaguar just casually strolled along in front of us, one of the nicest things about this sighting was that there were no other boats around as we had spotted it... great views and fantastic photos!

We headed along the river to a quieter spot where there was some bird activity, the only new bird that we picked up was a female Golden-green Woodpecker, we also got views of Black-capped Donacobius, Short-crested Flycatcher, Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns, Black Skimmer, Great Black-hawk, Black-collared Hawk and Orange-winged Parrots flying over high. We then got another call on the radio, another Jaguar was close by, so we couldn't resist! A few minutes later there was a large female on the river bank and just one other boat! As this section of the river was very narrow, we got seriously close to this Jaguar, amazing! Very happy with ourselves we headed back to the Lodge picking up some Capped Herons and Band-tailed Nighthawks on the way back. Those that stayed to bird around the Lodge grounds had Hyacinth Macaws, Campo Flicker, Nacunda Nighthawks and various other common species. We all met up for dinner at 19.00, followed by our usual daily checklist!

Day 7 As usual we met up at 05.30 for breakfast and left at 06.30 by minibus to bird a stretch of the Transpantaneira Road called Campo Jofre, some 20 minutes away from the hotel. It was very overcast today (almost cold!) with a slight breeze but the birding was good, although a little slow at times. We had several stops along the way and picked up a few new birds, and had better views of birds that we had previously seen earlier in the week. Notable species for this morning included Bare-faced Curassow, Little and Striped Cuckoos, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Glittering -throated Emerald, Toco Toucan, Chotoy, Cinereous-breasted and White-lored Spinetails, Greater Thornbird, Barred Antshrike, Southern Scrub-flycatcher, White-naped Xenopsaris, great views of four Masked Gnatcatchers, after a lot of effort White-banded Mockingbird, Orange-backed Troupial, Scarlet-headed Blackbird and good views of a male Rusty-collared Seedeater. We also encountered fresh Jaguar tracks across the road, it must have passed in front of us minutes beforehand as there were still drops of water on the dirt road and the surrounding grasses where it had come through a wet area prior to crossing. It made us feel quite vulnerable knowing it was so close and that we were not in the safe confines of a boat as we had viewed them before... all quite exciting! We returned to the lodge for lunch just after 12.00 and then were all to meet up again at 14.30 for an afternoon along the Cuiaba River. After lunch everyone wandered around the lodge grounds, taking photographs of various species including Southern Screamers around the pond and a rather funny pair of Turquoise-fronted Parrots sitting in a palm tree, they started talking to us and then started to laugh at us... can we really put these two birds on the list?! At 14.30 sharp we departed from the jetty on our two boats and set off along the main Cuiaba river. We went up several tributaries but unfortunately it was a cold afternoon, must have been around 12 degrees centigrade, which is very cold in Pantanal terms! There was not much about at all, no Jaguars were seen (just as well we had seen them the day before!), and we didn't see any new bird species. We did however get some nice shots of an Orange-backed Troupial and a Capped Heron from the boat on the way back to the Lodge. We arrived back at 17.45, had showers etc. and met up again at 19.00 for dinner, the daily checklist and some good banter about the day's sightings etc!

Day 8 As usual we met for breakfast at 05.30 and by 06.15 everything was loaded back onto the minibus for our departure back along the Transpantaneira Road. Today we had to travel some 135 km along the dirt road, so quite a long day ahead! We had several stops en-route going through various habitats and picked up several new species along the way. A highlight was a brief view of a Jaguarundi crossing the road a couple of hundred metres ahead of us. We arrived at the Hotel Pantanal Mato Grosso for lunch at 13.00 and continued the final part of our journey at 13.45, finally rolling into our next Hotel, the Piuval Lodge at 17.30. Today's birding highlights included Little Cuckoo, White-tailed Goldenthrout, Rufous-fronted Thornbird, Scarlet-headed Blackbird that we finally managed to photograph, two Orange-headed Tanagers, Purple Gallinule, Sungrebe, great views of two Sunbitterns alongside the road, Bat Falcon, two Green-barred Woodpeckers, Scaly-headed Parrots, Turquoise-fronted (countable!) and Orange-winged Parrots, two Pale-crested Woodpeckers and a handful of White-bellied Seedeaters. We still hadn't seen Nanday Parakeets however, so

Raphael decided we should check out a spot where he sometimes gets them close to a different hotel. We headed off the main road down a track for a couple of kilometres and stopped for some Greater Rheas. Just as we were photographing them Raphael said he could hear Nanday Parakeets, so we started to scan, and sure enough, there they were in the top of a nearby tree! This can be quite a difficult bird to see in the Northern Pantanal, so Raphael's local knowledge paid off really well! Just a little further down the track inside the same property we picked up 11 Chestnut-bellied Guans and two Bare-faced Curassows. We eventually arrived at the entrance road to Piuval Lodge, with a 3 km track taking us down to a lovely lodge. We quickly headed to our rooms and met up 15 minutes later to go owling. We set off in the minibus again into the forest at the back of the property, just a little way from the lodge we spotted an owl that flew across into a nearby tree, it was a beautiful Great Horned Owl! We all had views and also picked up a couple of Crab-eating foxes... eating an egret of all things! We drove on a little further to a spot where Raphael had previously seen Black-banded Owl, he gave it a play and within a few minutes it responded, and after a little bit of searching we picked it up in a tree just above the path, fantastic views of such a great bird that is really quite scarce in the Pantanal! It was now just gone 19.00 so we tried some playback for Mottled Owl, but had no response, but to be honest we were extremely happy with what we had already seen! We also enjoyed views of a couple of deer species today; Brocket and Marsh Deer. We arrived back at the Lodge at 19.30 and went straight into dinner, with two more Carb-eating Foxes on the lawn followed by our daily checklist and then off to bed!

Day 9 The morning started off very misty and really quite cold... strange for the Pantanal! We met as usual at 05.30 for breakfast followed by a trip into the forest within the property of Piuval Lodge. There was very little activity, birds were not responding to playback and it appears that they were concentrating on feeding rather than being territorial. However, the sun started to clear the mist, and we slowly started to pick up some birds including Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Sooty-fronted Spinetail, Planalto Slaty-antshrike, Rusty-fronted Tody-flycatcher and Rufous Casiornis. Towards the end of the trail we ended up at the little jetty where they depart for boat trips. Raphael decided to try some playback for Grey-breasted Crake, and after a lot of patience we finally glimpsed one several times as it crossed back and forth between the undergrowth. Then we tried for Rufous-sided Crake and again finally after some effort we all got some views of one kind or another! We also had Band-tailed Antbird in the same area followed by an Aplomado Falcon flying over fast. We headed back to the Lodge for a quick bathroom stop and then walked out into the field in front of the lodge to look for Yellowish Pipit, and within about 10 minutes Adrian had picked one up and we all managed to get really good views. We then all boarded the bus again and headed off across the field, picked up two Red-legged Seriemas (finally excellent views), and stopped by an isolated patch of woodland. Raphael obviously had a plan and as we walked through this palm grove he was playing Dull-capped Attila, a tough bird to see in the area. On the way through he picked up an Undulated Tinamou, which finally gave views for nearly everyone! After another few minutes, the attila suddenly appeared... excellent!!! We headed back to the comfort of the lodge for lunch and by 14.00 had everything packed up again and were on our way towards our next destination... Chapada das Guimaraes! We drove for just 20 minutes before we left the rather bumpy last section of the Transpantaneira road and finally hit the smooth tarmac, something we hadn't encountered for the last four days! Pepito drove us safely back through Pocone and we rolled into Cuiaba by 16.30, stopped for a quick bathroom break at a local service station and then headed off again for Chapada. On the journey Adrian, Geoff and Dave picked up four Blue-and-yellow Macaws from the minibus! As we left Cuiaba we could see distant flat topped mountains and, as got closer and with the sun beginning to set, the light was perfect for a quick photo stop. Driving on for a further 40 minutes, we arrived at the picturesque town of Chapada das Guimaraes by 17.40 and into our new accommodation of the Pehhasco Hotel. We quickly checked in, showered and as we met up at 19.00 to go for dinner in the local town. We heard Striped Owl calling, Raphael used some playback and it came in so close, but we couldn't see it! Then thankfully it flew over us and gave pretty good views! So on to the bus and headed into town and went to a nice Italian restaurant for dinner. Arriving back at the hotel by 21.00 we completed the day's checklist and retired for the evening!

Day 10 So, our last full day in the field was already upon us, the last eight days had flown past and we had covered a lot of ground, a lot of bridges and some bumpy/dusty dirt roads! For our final day we were to spend our time in the Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park, a park with a large amount of intact Cerrado type habitat that holds a lot of different bird species and several target endemics. We met up for a quick coffee at 05.30 and by 06.00 we were off! We took a short drive to the Agua Fria Road that runs through Cerrado habitat and Raphael had a plan! They are ‘improving’ the road here which made it very sandy and dusty but, as soon as we got out of the minibus Rafael started to play many of our target species. Within the first couple of hours we had amazingly already picked up White-vented Violet-ear, Checkered Woodpecker, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Chapada Flycatcher, Blue-and-white Swallow, Curl-crested Jay, Black-faced, White-banded and White-rumped Tanagers and to top everything off, several Coal-crested Finches, what an amazing couple of hours! We were heading back to the minibus when we heard Rufous-winged Antshrike calling, we had tried playback for this bird a few times this morning, but with no response. As it’s an endemic and it would be our last chance to see it, we headed off of the road into the undergrowth and finally managed to call it in, another lovely endemic bird! We headed back to the hotel for breakfast and arrived at 09.15 but by 10.00 we were already back out on the road and driving towards a patch of forest called Jamaca Valley. Here we walked down a narrow track and basically “pished” for Fiery-capped and Band-tailed Manakins all the way down. It was already quite warm and there was not much responding. We did however, manage to pick up Chestnut-eared Aracari, Plain Antvireo, Large-billed Antwren, Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Golden-crowned Warbler and a cracking male Band-tailed Manakin! Raphael managed to locate a couple of females, then he played Ferruginous Pygmy-owl and out of nowhere a male appeared, hung around for 20 minutes or so and gave everyone ample opportunities to take photos... even Bill, who was looking at butterflies and arrived 20 minutes after the bird had appeared, got great photos! After a brilliant morning’s birding we headed to a restaurant called Morro dos Ventos for lunch where we also managed to pick up a Cliff Flycatcher in the grounds and literally picked up a Sayaca Tanager and released it outside the dining room! It was a lovely restaurant with stunning views, stunning surroundings and great food! We drove back to the hotel arriving at 15.00, after a quick toilet stop we headed back out to another road in the park that headed towards a cave called Aroe Jare. It was already quite late in the day but we managed to see Aplomado Falcon, Burrowing Owl, Red-legged Seriema, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird and just as the sun started to go down we heard a Collared Crescentchest calling. We had to head into the Cerrado after the call, it was the last of our day’s target birds! We approached the area slowly and Raphael picked up the bird, a beautiful bird indeed! A great end to a great day, and a great week’s birding! We arrived back at 18.45, went into the local town for our pre-ordered dinners and got back to the hotel at 21.00. We completed the last day’s checklist (rather a good one!) and then played for Striped Owl from the hotel perimeter... and sure enough, in it came, a young bird that looked like it had just recently fledged the nest. All exhausted we headed off to bed!

Day 11 So the final morning was upon us! We had very little time around Chapada dos Guimaraes as we had to be at the airport for 09.30. We drove to the entrance of the National Park to see if we could access the waterfall area for a little bit of birding before setting off on our 1.5-hour journey back to Cuiaba. Unfortunately, there had been a fire in the park overnight and they had to wait for clearance before opening the park to the public, this was something we could not wait for! So we decided to bird around the car park area for just under an hour. There was not a great deal of activity but we did manage to pick up a group of Suiriri Flycatchers, White-collared Swifts, Red-crested Finch and several White-eared Puffbirds and White-rumped Tanagers. We arrived back into the airport bang on time at 09.30 and said our goodbyes to our excellent guide Raphael and our great driver Pepito! Checked in for our flights and by 11.30 we were all boarding for our flights, the group to Sao Paulo and Andy to Brazilia with Raphael staying around the Pantanal for a while. We’d had a great ten days, the weather had been kind and we had seen some truly fantastic birds! The group arrived in Sao Paulo on time and connected with the overnight international flight to Frankfurt.

Day 12: Arrival in Frankfurt and transfer to our London flight at the end of this memorable tour.

Andy Foster