



Wildwings

WILDWINGS BRAZIL JAGUARS 2012

NORTHERN PANTANAL & EMAS NATIONAL PARK – SEPTEMBER 8th–21st

Tour report by leader Regina Ribeiro

Since 2004, Wildwings has been running successful mammal tours in Southeast Brazil and the Pantanal. For 2012, the trip had a different proposal, which combined the Northern Pantanal, a huge seasonal-floodplain, a well known place for wildlife and a special to look for Jaguars and Emas National Park, in the North-eastern edge of the Pantanal, the rich mosaic of Cerrado (Savanna Woodland) landscapes supports an enormous variety of mammal species which includes the magnificent Maned Wolf.

SEP 8TH – LEAVE UK TO BRAZIL.

SEP 9TH – FLY FROM SAO PAULO TO CUIABA, TRANSFER TO THE NORTHERN PANTANAL

Our trip started at Cuiaba with a group of six people. We transferred by road to the Pantanal, where we would be exploring for the next eight days. By 3 30 pm, we crossed the official gate of the Pantanal and soon after, along the Transpantaneira, stopped to watch our first concentration of caimans, capybaras, cormorants, egrets, herons, jabirus, screamers, spoonbills, kingfishers all around the remaining water pools. We then drove to Araras Lodge to spend three nights. After dinner, a walk along the boardwalk behind the lodge and we saw a White-eared Opossum moving among the tree roots, a group of sleeping coatis and a Crab-eating Fox wandering around. Checked the old fig tree and saw the Lesser Fishing and Palla's Mastiff Bats roosting. During our first night drive, in the open truck, we watched Crab-eating Raccoon feeding on Macauba palm fruit and another Crab-eating Fox by the road.

SEP 10th and 11th – ARARAS LODGE

In our walk before sunrise, we watched a group of coatis leaving their roost, caimans and capybaras gathering around the pools just by the lodge. In the surrounding area the birds easily observed included Bared-faced Curassows, Woodstorks, Green and Plumbeous Ibises, Hyacinth Macaws, Blue-fronted Parrots, Yellow-chevroned Parakeets, Purplish Jays, Crested and Yellow-billed Cardinals among others. After breakfast we went hiking in the forest along the tower boardwalk, a great place to search for animals. Seen from there were several Azaras Agoutis feeding on Acuri palm nuts, coatis and a troop of Black-striped Capuchin Monkeys that entertained us for quite sometime. Birds seen included Green-barred Woodpeckers, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, Amazonian Motmot, Great and Barred Antshrikes, Mato Grosso Antbird,

Dull-eyed Attila, and Gray-head Tanagers. Late afternoon the drive to Passo da Ema road turned to be very productive as animals started moving before sunset towards the water pools. Found our first Tapir coming out from the woods and walking through the field until going into the forest, then a few individuals of Gray and Red-brocket Deer, Crab-eating Raccoons, Crab-eating Foxes and night birds such as Common and Great Potoos, Pauraques and Little Nightjars.

Another early morning around the lodge, birds seen included Chestnut-eared Aracaris, Toco Toucans, White Woodpeckers, Yellow-chinned Spinetails, Greater Thornbird, Gray-crested Cachalote, Rufous Horneros, Sayaca and Palm Tanagers and the striking Orange-backed Troupial. After breakfast we left for a walk in the dry forests along Passo da Ema road, another good place to spot wildlife in the area. Right at the beginning of the trail two Collared Peccaries ran away, and then further inside the forest at least three groups of Black-and-Gold Howler Monkeys including males, females with infants and juveniles. Also groups of Black-striped Capuchins, a few agoutis and coatis. We enjoyed wonderful views of Blue-throated Piping Guans, Pale-crested Woodpecker, Black-fronted Nunbirds and Rufous Casiornis. In our drive along the deciduous forest of Mata do Carvoeiro, another Collared Peccary crossed the path in the distance. We returned to the lodge as temperature reached around 40 degrees Celsius! We left in the truck late afternoon to visit Curicaca Lodge a known place to try for Pacas, a shy rodent and difficult to be found. On the way we noted a female Marsh Deer, and around the lodge a group of howlers, capuchins, agoutis and a pair of foxes wandering by. A Great Potoo has its roost by the rooms and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers nest there too. It was odd to see a caiman eating a parrot and disappearing under water with his mouth covered with green feathers. Until 7pm no Pacas and instead of that agoutis and a Brazilian Rabbit had showed up. On the way back spotlighting, we saw Marsh Deer, more Brazilians Rabbits, raccoons, foxes and Boat-billed Herons around the remaining water pools. After dinner another truck drive and more raccoons searching for food in the muddy ponds, an unidentified opossum inside thick vegetation quick disappeared and for a surprise, a small and beautiful Rainbow Boa on the road.

SEP 12TH - ARARAS LODGE TO PORTO JOFRE - CUIABA RIVER

Up the observation tower before sunrise having seen Red-brocket Deer in the forest. From the tower a quick view of Black-tailed Marmosets running along the branches on the tree canopy. We left towards Jofre after breakfast for three nights. The first stretch of the road between Araras and Pixaim River was the most productive. We spotted Gray-brocket Deer, Marsh Deer, coatis and Red-footed Tortoise walking on the mud. A pair of Southern River Otters and one Giant Otter were spotted while crossing the Pixaim River Bridge. River otters can be shy and normally observed solitary. So it was quite a sighting to see the two hunting under the water hyacinths and swimming almost side by side with the Giant Otter. We stopped at Jaguar Ecological Reserve (JER) for lunch and continued our journey stopping at Campo Jofre where two chicks of Great Horned Owls were found high up in the trees. This open field is a good area to watch birds like Maguari Storks, Jabirus, Woodstorks, Southern Screamers, Muscoy Ducks, Limpkins, Buff-necked Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Herons, Roseate Spoonbills, Amazon and Ringed Kingfishers. The odd Caiman Lizard briefly seen on the way. Arrival at Jofre and late afternoon went looking for Brazilian Cavy and found them in the tall grass near the Water Lily pond. Feeding on the ground flocks of seedeaters such as the Rusty-collared, Double-collared and Tawny-bellied were also observed.

During the night drive we saw more Pauraques, small bats hawking over the water's surface on the pools along the road and a Marsh Deer in the forest edge.

SEP 13th – CUIABA RIVER

Today we would be exploring the Cuiaba River and its tributaries looking for Jaguars and other wildlife. Our excursion started at 6am and around 7:20am our first Jaguar sighting on the Piquiri River, walking on the beach and disappearing into the bushes. Exploring the river upstream around 9am a Tapir was spotted swimming along the water edge, coming out to the bank and walking into the forest. A group of hunting Giant Otters were watched on the Corixo Negro, and observing them interacting and hear their vocalizations is quite special. Birding can be good along the river too and we noted Black Skimmers, Large and Yellow-billed Terns, Solitary Sandpipers, Pied Plovers, White-winged Swallows, Black-Collared Hawks among many other species. Two groups of howlers were watched moving on the tree tops along the rivers. The second Jaguar today was found around 5pm on the Tres Irmaos River (Tree Brothers River) and had a radio collar. It was a big old male who seemed to be hot and tired. While there we had brief views as he kept hiding behind thick vegetation. On the way back at sunset, the smell of guano indicates that hundreds of fishing bats are leaving their roosts and can be seen hawking over the water. The Band-tailed Nightjars also comes out about the same time.

SEP 14th – CUIABA RIVER

Early morning a male Marsh Deer with big antlers was standing on the river edge ready for a drink. At Tres Irmaos River around 7:30am we saw our third Jaguar sitting on the beach and walking away. We were able to follow him for over an hour, moving along the bank through thick vegetation. Going up stream the fourth one was found sitting on the bank, clear view, beautiful light and he stayed for a short time until another boat got too close and he slowly moved away. Around 10:30am our fifth Jaguar, which we suspected that it might have been the last one seen, was watched hunting along the tall grass of the Corixo Negro River, doing some attempts and eventually catching a small caiman that was carried away and taken inside the forest. It had been an exciting morning. In late afternoon a mating pair of Jaguars was the trip highlight. First, a female was spotted moving fast along the bank of the Piquiri River. From behind the bushes we heard her roaring, then coming out and swimming on the river edge to reach the next bank until appearing in full view on the beach. It was a radio collared animal. On the beach she kept wandering around and rolling on sand for while and disappearing behind the bushes. Clearly she was in heat. About ten minutes later, all of a sudden, a male came out from the same path and vanished into the way she had gone. It was getting dark, and we were the only boat left. With a spotlight we found the bright Jaguar eyes moving into the bushes and the two finally showed up. The big male came down for a drink while the female stayed up in the bank. We watched this courting pair for a while until feeling it was time to leave them alone. Tonight during our night spotting on the road, we had a wonderful encounter with a young Ocelot who almost fell down the bridge when he first saw the car and then stood in front of our vehicle for over 15 minutes, totally relaxed and only left when we started moving the truck. We were very fortunate with such wonderful sightings of all these cats today!

SEP 15TH – PORTO JOFRE TO JAGUAR ECOLOGICAL RESERVE (JER)

Left in the morning for JER for one night. It was worth it to stop by the Hyacinth Macaw's nest and watch them coming in and out from the tree cavity with at least two more pairs in nearby trees. On the Transpantaneira, a single capuchin monkey was observed eating flowers and having his face covered with pollen from the Abobreira Tree. Visiting the abandoned research station we saw Sebas Short-tailed Bats and birds like Great Potoo in his roost, Golden-collared Macaws, Lineated Woodpecker and Yellow-rumped Caciques. Driving along the Santa Isabel road, more groups of howlers and beautiful views of Blue-crowned Trogons and Helmeted Manakins. After lunch a long break to avoid the heat of the day. The area around JER due to its extreme dry conditions had very slow mammal activity. In the afternoon we tried the Santa Isabel road again and saw more howlers, agoutis and big flocks of Piping Guans, Scaly-headed Parrots, and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets feeding on flowers of Piuva (*Tabebuia* sp.). During the dry season the yellow and pink blossoms of these trees are spectacular. At dawn we saw another Crab-eating Raccoon and doing the spotlighting, two more Red-brocket Deer. The night highlight was to watch a caiman crossing the road followed by at least 20 tiny caimans that have just hatched and were looking for a water pool.

SEP 16TH - JAGUAR ECOLOGICAL RESERVE TO PIXAIM RIVER

Left to Santa Isabel road at 430am and it was great to hear the forest waking up. Fresh tracks of ocelot, tapir and jaguar could be seen, agoutis moving along the road, groups of noisy howlers just starting to howl, and we heard Black-tailed Marmosets. Morning transfer to the Pixaim River for one night. On the way marmosets crossed the road and vanished into tree vines. Only one hour of boat excursion was possible due to the heat and instead of that we hiked along the river side trail behind the hotel forest. Around 1030am we found two coatis in the tree moving up high and soon after we encountered a Jaguar walking just 50 metres ahead of us and disappearing on the trail bend. Exciting and a bit frightened at the same time, we were taken by surprise and that made our hearts beat fast! This had been our eighth Jaguar sighting! In the afternoon during the boat ride we watched a pair of River Otters at close range feeding, a colony of Long-nosed Bats under the bridge, a few Green Iguanas camouflaged among the tree leaves and around 5pm, in the distance, we spotted a Tapir on the river bank. The Pixaim River is an area of great diversity. Birds seen in our short ride included Chestnut-bellied Guan, Sunbitterns, Sungrebe, Little Blue, Rufescent Tiger and Cocoi Herons, Osprey, Great Black Hawks, Green-and-Rufous, Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, among others. In our last night drive north of Transpananeira we saw foxes, raccoons, a brief view of a beautiful Ocelot drinking water by the pool, a Marsh deer and Red-brocket Deer.

SEP 17TH - PIXAIM RIVER TO CUIABA, FLY TO CAMPO GRANDE AND TRANSFER TO CHAPADAO DO CEU

The early transfer to Cuiaba airport was superb. About 3Km north of Pixaim, a Giant Anteater slowly crossed in front of our car, then we found Brazilian Rabbits, Crab-eating Raccoon, agouti, coatis, foxes, capybaras, caimans and lots of birds. Even dealing with hard conditions as heat and dust, the Pantanal is a place of unforgettable wildlife sightings. Fly to Campo Grande and transfer 380km to Chapadão do Ceu for four nights. Chapadao is the nearest town to Emas National Park, located 27Km away.

EXTENSION – EMAS NATIONAL PARK

SEP 18th – CHAPADAO DO CEU – EMAS NATIONAL PARK

We met our local guide and left at 530am when it was still dark driving to the park through the roads along the farmed areas where a diversity of mammals are often observed including the Maned Wolf. A male Marsh Deer was the first seen in the area along with a huge number of birds just getting started. We made several stops to watch and hear the Streamer-tailed and White-headed Marsh Tyrants, Yellow-rumped Marshbirds, White-browed Blackbirds and Grassland Sparrows, among others. Good numbers of Greater Rheas spread around the crop fields, sightings of the exotic Red-legged Seriemas as well as countless flocks of Blue-and-yellow and Red-Shouldered Macaws, Blue-fronted and Yellow-faced Amazon Parrots, White-eyed and Blue-crowned Parakeets, all watched in their morning feeding. Before entering the park a herd of Pampas's Deer was found including a female with fawn. Considered near-threatened this is the most abundant and easily viewing mammal in the area. A brief view of the Yellow Armadillo walking in front of our vehicle and vanishing into one of the many burrows along the road side. Lunch in town and back to the park in the afternoon. The park border and crop fields turned out to be the most productive as the animals often move between these areas. Late afternoon a group of more than 50 White-lipped Peccaries with youngsters was feeding on crops and crossing back to the park. Two of them stood up in the track staring at us and raising their hair and quickly running away into the woods. On the same trail, a pair of Crab-eating Foxes with two cubs was observed and another one moving on the shrub vegetation near the park entrance. Dinner was arranged at Pousada Passo da Ema, a small lodge, located 8km from the park with simple accommodations, delicious food and good chances to spot a variety of mammals along the way. On the way out we saw a Neotropical Rattle Snake crossing the path. Drove to the neighboring Sucuriu farm for trying the wolf and around 9pm heard the barking in the distance. Shortly after that two big ears on top of the tall grass was the first sight before he turned around looking at us and soon we found out that they were two wolves. It was a great moment to watch the hunting pair with their manes raised while jumping to catch a prey and moving through the grass until disappearing out of the back of the field out of view.

SEP 19th – EMAS NATIONAL PARK

This morning we took the farm routes again towards the park and more stops for Pampas's Deer at close range. Birds observed included the Lesser Nothura, Aplomado Falcons, Curl-crested Jays, White-rumped Swallows, White-eared Puffbirds, Fork-tailed Palm Swifts, Rusty-backed Antwren, White-rumped and Gray Monjitas, Fork-tailed Flycatchers, Black-throated Saltator and Coal-crested Finches. In the park headquarters we found Tegu Lizards. Around 2pm by the park entrance, two Greater Grisons suddenly ran across the road in front of our car and kept running on the edge until hiding inside a burrow. In the afternoon in the open truck we crossed the Rio Formoso to explore the park grasslands, a very unique habitat with its countless termite mounds and a place to look for the Hoary Fox and other Cerrado specialties, such as the Cock-tailed Tyrant. It was very windy and hard to spot birds. Late afternoon on the way back a group of White-lipped Peccaries was briefly seen running into the woods. By the park gate at least two or three Small-billed Tinamous and the highlight was to watch a Burrowing Owl feeding its four chicks. A pair of Crab-eating

Foxes was also found moving along the fields. After dinner we returned to our hotel in town due to a heavy storm.

SEP 20th – EMAS NATIONAL PARK

Around 6am we were driving through the sugar cane fields and had our first sight of a wet Hog-nosed Skunk. Then drove into the park area to try to find the very rare Cone-billed Tanager. No success with it but good views of Red-winged Tinamous, White-tailed Hawks, Dark-billed Cuckoo, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Shrike-like and White-rumped Tanagers. The huge Bullet Ants were found on the road as well as fresh tracks of tapirs and Giant Armadillo burrows. Early afternoon we came back to the park grasslands in the open truck and crossing our path an amazing Toad-eating Snake moving slowly and flattened it's body and head as we approached to watch it. Late in the day we drove back to the marsh areas of Sucuriu Farm and found a Giant Anteater that seemed to have a young on its back and feeding just by the road side completely camouflaged as a termite mound, smelled us and fast disappeared inside the tall vegetation. Searching the areas of sugar cane the Hog-nosed Skunk came out from the same path of this morning, walking towards the car and crossed to a side track giving us very good views. Dinner at Passo da Ema and on the way out a Capybara was spotted by the stream and right after two Tapirs feeding in the crop field, a female and a youngster that still had faint stripes on it's body. Drove back into the park as tonight we would have a chance to see the beginning of the bioluminescence, a natural phenomenon that can only be observed at the months of September and October. With the first rains, the termite's mounds get illuminated by a beetle larvae that emerge and using their bioluminescence, attract the termites which then get eaten. It was quite interesting to witness the beginning of such a unique phenomenon. This was our last journey into the park.

Although seeing less density of animals than the Pantanal, Emas National Park is more than worth a visit. Its areas of savanna woodlands, impressive grasslands, gallery forests, clear water rivers and agricultural areas in the park surroundings is a perfect combination to find great birds, a diversity of wildlife with good chances to find rare species of mammals along its thousands of hectares to be explored.

SEP 21ST – CHAPADAO DO CEU TRANSFER TO CAMPO GRANDE.END OF TOUR

Drove from Chapadao do Ceu to Campo Grande airport with a farewell lunch in town.

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