

## Northeastern Brazil 13.-23. October 2018

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I had long wanted to visit northeastern Brazil, a center of bird endemism and extinction, and when I had the opportunity to attend a conference in Natal in October, I added a round trip through the region to try and see as many of the rare birds and mammals as possible. With 43 mammal species seen, including several of the endemic monkeys and porcupines, the trip greatly exceeded my expectations.

I arranged the tour with Caio Brito of Brazil Birding Experts ([www.brazilbirdingexperts.com](http://www.brazilbirdingexperts.com)). This was the best possible choice I could have taken. Not only is Caio an outstanding birding guide, he also is a great person to be with. We spent hours in the car (we drove 3350 km) talking about birds, life, and everything in between. He is extremely hard-working in the field, and while he is not a mammal expert, he had no problems with getting up at 1:30 to reach a forest site in the dark to look for bats. He also has an extensive network of contacts and was able to obtain tons of useful information during the trip. I am looking forward to doing another tour with him.

We came up with following **itinerary**:

12.10.: On the day prior to the actual tour, two botany students from Recife took me to a forest near Sao Vicente Ferrer to look for ferns. Met Caio at Joao Pessoa, Paraiba state, in the evening.

14.10.: Early morning visit to RPN Gargaú for Blond Capuchin and Red-handed Howler (and 2 bird species). Upon cleaning up by 7 am, we then drove to a small reserve near Recife to try for a very special hummingbird. Night near Joao Pessoa.

15.10.: Drive to Tamandaré, Pernambuco reserve. Afternoon at Saltinho Reserve.

16.10.: Early departure to Frei Caneca Reserve, then moving on to Pedra d'Anta Reserve. Later drive to Quilombo Park Hotel at Uniao dos Palmares, Alagoas state.

17.10.: Very early departure to Murici Reserve where we stayed until midday. Afternoon at the hotel, looking for the porcupine at night.

18.10.: Long drive to Estancia, Sergipe state. Short afternoon stop at a forest patch near Itaporanga d'Ajuda.

19.10.: Morning in Crasto Reserve. Later long drive to Canudos, with a late afternoon stop near Jeremoaba on an unsuccessful search for Blond Titis.

20.10.: Early morning in Canudos Reserve. Later drive to the Chapada de Araripe and on to Pau Preto Lodge near Potengi.

21.10.: Full day around Pau Preto Lodge.

22.10.: Drive to Guaramiranga in the Baturité mountains via Quixadá. Evening looking for the porcupine.

23.10.: Morning around Guaramiranga, followed by drive to Morada Nova to look for some birds and Capuchins. Then on to Fortaleza, where I took a shower at the house of Caio's mom and then on to the airport for a late flight.

### Main sites visited

Gargaú Private Reserve near Joao Pessoa (about 7°00'S, 34°57'W): One of the last large forest patches in a region largely consisting of sugarcane plantations. A stronghold of Blond Capuchin, which is habituated here.

Saltinho Reserve near Tamandaré (8°44'S, 35°10'W): A federal reserve that can only be accessed with a research permit. However, a major road runs through it.

Frei Caneca Reserve and Pedra d'Anta Reserve (8°43'S, 35°51'W): Together, these preserve one of the larger forest patches in Pernambuco state. Access is via a dirt road that runs through the forest.

Quilombo Park Hotel near Uniao dos Palmares (9°10'S, 36°00'W): This hotel is excellent for bats and has the Pernambuco Dwarf Porcupine on its grounds. Avoid weekends and holidays!

Murici Reserve (9°13'S, 35°52'W): The largest remaining forest patch in Alagoas, but badly degraded by former logging. Still, it maintains a number of mammals, camping would be good.

Craсто Reserve near Estancia (11°22'S, 37°24'W): A nice reserve with lots of Coimbra Filho's Titi Monkeys. Access is via a paved road that runs through the reserve. There are only a few paths into the forest.

Pau Preto Lodge near Potengi (7°05'15"S, 40°04'56"W): A very nice small lodge in a patch of dry thorny Caatinga. Birding is mainly in taller habitat about 45 min drive away, but around the lodge one can walk at night through the forest for two armadillo species, Jaguarundi, and Striped Hog-nosed Skunk. According to the owner, early rainy season (Nov/Dec) is best for mammal activity.

Guaramiranga, Baturité mountains: These isolated mountains (1100 m) still maintain some of their forest cover. This is a humid forest island among a sea of lower elevation dry habitats and such harbours a large number of endemic species and subspecies. Good forest can be found around Hotel Escola do IFCS Guaramiranga (4°16'01"S, 38°55'54"W) and adjacent Parque das Trilhas (Caio can arrange night access) as well as around Hotel Remanso (4°14'37"S, 38°55'50"W).

## **Bats and rodents**

In Brazil, a permit is needed to catch mammals. Thus, even if a local land owner may allow trapping on his property, if this comes to the attention of the authorities, this may lead to severe trouble not only for you, but also to the tour guide. I therefore completely refrained from trapping. Accordingly, my rodent list is minimal.

For bats, my records are mainly based on a combination of searching for roosts (again, Caio's contacts helped), and visual records of flying birds (also with the thermal scope) in combination with the use of a bat detector (Echo Meter Touch 2). Unfortunately, the auto-identification software of the bat detector "only" includes some 70 neotropical species, mainly from Central America, so that many of the determinations I got were clearly wrong. It took a lot of detective work to try and link the recordings to the species occurring in the region, the bats that I saw, and the echolocation keys in the excellent guide to Amazonian bats. Quilombo Park Hotel was particularly good for bats since it has tall floodlights that allow good visuals and has large mixed bat roosts under the roofs of the buildings. Still, there are bound to be mistakes in my determinations. At least I have the recordings and I hope that in the future I may be able to get more reliable determinations.

The other downside of not being able to catch bats is that I recorded few phyllostomatid bats. These almost do not vocalize and I had many bats flying around for which I was unable to get any recordings. I assume that these were mostly phyllostomatids, including the very common genera *Glossophaga*, *Sturnira*, etc.

## **A note on the birds**

While this is a mammals report, some may be interested in the birds we saw. In total, we recorded 321 species, including 64 of my 71 target species. This not only included the standard fare of the trip such as Lear's Macaw and Araripe Manakin, but also hard-to-get species such as Racket-tailed Coquette, Pinto's Spinetail, Pernambuco Foliage-Gleaner (first bird seen on the

tour), and the extremely rare form of Short-tailed Antthrush at Guaramiranga. The only two “important” species we missed were Yellow-faced Siskin, which is in dramatic decline due to trapping for the cage bird trade, and the Baturité subspecies of Spot-winged Wood-Quail, which suffered a massive decline six years ago in a drought and is only slowly recovering; the others were marginal species better seen elsewhere.

### Species recorded

Brazilian White-eared Opossum (*Didelphis albiventris*): One at night around Pao Preto Lodge. Several DOR.

Seven-banded Armadillo (*Dasytus septemcinctus*): One seen at night after a lot of work at Pao Preto Lodge.

(Nine-banded Armadillo (*Dasytus novemcinctus*): Diggings of presumably this species seen in Murici Reserve.)

(Six-banded Armadillo (*Euphractus sexcinctus*): Numerous burrows seen at Pao Preto Lodge.)

Common Marmoset (*Callithrix jacchus*): First seen at ESEC de Caetes near Recife. Common, seen in most forest patches as well as in suburban areas. Very tame on the grounds of Quilombo Park Hotel.



Black-tufted-ear Marmoset (*Callithrix penicillata*): Heard and briefly seen at Crasto.

Yellow-breasted Capuchin (*Sapajus xanthosternus*): One briefly glimpsed in a forest patch near Itaporanga d’Ajuda. A group found by accident at Crasto Reserve when I entered the forest to search for the titis. A very quiet and retiring species, not easy to find. About 3000 individuals estimated to remain in the wild.

Blond Capuchin (*Sapajus flavius*): A habituated group of about 50 easily seen at Gargaú. World population estimated at 1000-2000 individuals.



Red-handed Howler (*Alouatta belzebul*): A group of about 6 tracked down by their vocalizations at RPN Gargaú. The isolated population of this species in NE Brazil is estimated at 300 individuals. Not a great picture, but they moved away fairly quickly...



Squirrel Monkey sp. (*Saimiri* sp.): A group seen at dusk from the road in Saltinho Reserve. Not native to the area, a confiscated group of 25 individuals were released in the reserve a few decades ago and have done well. Not seen well enough to know which form is involved.

Coimbra-Filho's Titi Monkey (*Callicebus coimbrai*): One group seen in Crasto Reserve about 50 m from the road along a path that enters the road to the left (coming in from Estancia) opposite a "No overtake" sign that follows a sign saying "Nao destruya a fauna". Another group heard on the opposite side of the road, where there were also some paths into the forest. Many other groups heard further away from the road.

Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*): One in a roadside marsh between Sao Vicente Ferrer and Recife.

Rock Cavy (*Kerodon rupestris*): One at the Lear's Macaw breeding cliffs near Canudos.

Jack's Red-rumped Agouti (*Dasyprocta iacki*): One seen at Gargaú Reserve.

Black-rumped Agouti (*Dasyprocta prymnolopha*): One at night in Murici Reserve. Possibly another one flushed some distance away in the forest.

Baturite Porcupine (*Coendou baturitensis*): Caio took the to the house of a friend near Guaramiranga who has been feeding the porcupines for 14 years. Supposedly, they come to the feeder every evening, but we stayed until 21:30 and saw none. Upon returning to the Hotel (Escola do IFCE Guaramiranga), we asked the night guard about the porcupines and he said that they commonly feed in the mango and jackfruit trees at the forest margin around the hotel. Indeed, within 3 minutes we found one!



Pernambuco Dwarf Porcupine (*Coendou speratus*): 1 distantly seen at Quilombo Park Hotel. According to the night guard, one individual sleeps in the large coconut palm above the pool and uses the electrical cables on the hotel grounds to move around the hotel grounds, where it also visits the mango trees. Main periods of activity would be around 6-9 pm and 4-7 am. We spent a good amount of time watching the cables and the coconut nut, but I only saw it once about 30 m away; when I shined my light on it, it moved away. The

species has a very distinctive smell (a bit like peccary), which we detected at 3 locations in Murici Reserve. I guess this would also be a good place to look for it. It is possible to camp in Murici, although I suspect that a permit might be required.

Patton's Atlantic Tree-rat (*Phyllomys pattoni*): 1 seen at night on the grounds of Quilombo Park Hotel while searching for the porcupine.

Proboscis Bat (*Rhynchonycteris naso*): Seen at a night roost in the entrance building to Quilombo Park Hotel and bat-detected at Crasto.



Lesser Sac-winged Bat (*Saccopteryx leptura*): Photographed and recorded at Gargaú, also bat-detected at Saltinho, Quilombo, Crasto, Pau Preto, and Guaramiranga.



Greater Sac-winged Bat (*Saccopteryx bilineata*): Identified by bat detector at Gargaú, Saltinho, Quilombo, Murici, Crasto and Guaramiranga, but I am sceptical of this determination. Although these sites are all within the range of species, no local inventory that I have seen lists it.

Northern Ghost Bat (*Diclidurus albus*): Seen and recorded in the floodlights at Quilombo Park Hotel, also bat-detected at Saltinho and Guaramiranga.

Greater Dog-like Bat (*Peropteryx kappleri*): Seen and recorded in the floodlights at Quilombo Park Hotel, also bat-detected at Saltinho, Pau Preto, and Guaramiranga.

Lesser Dog-like Bat (*Peropteryx macrotis*): Bat-detected at Crasto, Canudos, and Pau Preto.

Common Vampire Bat (*Desmodus rotundus*): A nice colony found in a dead tree at Sao Vicente Ferrer.

Goldman's Nectar Bat (*Lonchophylla mordax*): We flushed an individual of this species from its day roost at Sao Vicente Ferrer. Luckily, it settled down on a new perch where I could see it but it flew before I was able to approach it for a photo.

Great Fruit-eating Bat (*Artibeus lituratus*): A large *Artibeus* seen well at Quilombo Park Hotel was probably this species. Also presumably seen elsewhere.

Flat-faced Fruit-eating Bat (*Artibeus planirostris*): One found by the local guard at Pedro d'Anta Reserve roosting under folded banana leaves.



White-line Broad-nosed Bat (*Platyrrhinus lineatus*): Based on a tip by one of Caio's buddies, we found two roosting under the roof of one of the bungalows at Arajara Park in the Araripe Range.



Lesser Bulldog Bat (*Noctilio albiventris*): Seen and bat-detected at Quilombo Park Hotel.

Brazilian Funnel-eared Bat (*Natalus espirosantensis*): The local guide at Sao Vicente Ferrer showed me a small colony under a large rock in the forest.

Broad-eared Bat (*Nyctinomops laticaudatus*): Seen and recorded at Quilombo Park Hotel, also recorded at Saltinho and Crasto.

Mato Grosso Dog-faced Bat (*Molossops matogrossensis*): Seen and recorded at the breeding cliffs of the Lear's Macaw at Canudos.

Southern Dog-faced Bat (*Cynomops planirostris*): Seen and recorded at Quilombo Park Hotel, also recorded at Saltinho, Crasto and Guaramiranga.

Velvety Free-tailed Bat (*Molossus molossus*): Seen well and recorded at Quilombo Park Hotel. Also recorded at Saltinho and Guaramiranga.



Black Mastiff Bat (*Molossus rufus*): Seen at night roosts at Quilombo Park Hotel (under the roofs of the two rightmost chalets) and bat-recorded there and at Saltinho, Crasto, and Pau Preto.



Black Myotis (*Myotis nigricans*): Seen and recorded at Saltinho. A colony found in a small cave at Arajara Park in the Araripe Range. Also bat-detected at Crasto and Guaramiranga.

Riparian Myotis (*Myotis riparius*): Seen and recorded at Saltinho.

Silver-tipped Myotis (*Myotis albescens*): Seen and recorded at Pau Preto.

Husson's Yellow Bat (*Rhogeessa hussoni*): Seen very well at Pau Preto, where I found a night roost.

Brazilian Brown Bat (*Eptesicus brasiliensis*): Recorded at Crasto and Guaramiranga.

Argentine Brown Bat (*Eptesicus furinalis*): Recorded at Quilombo Park Hotel, Crasto, and Guaramiranga.

Southern Yellow Bat (*Lasiurus ega*): Seen well and recorded at Guaramiranga, also recorded at Saltinho and Crasto.

Desert Red Bat (*Lasiuris blossevillii*): Recorded at Pau Preto.

Crab-eating Fox (*Cerdocyon thous*): One glimpsed in the mangroves at Crasto Reserve. Two regularly attended the bird feeders at night at Pau Preto Lodge to take bananas. Several DOR in the dry areas of Ceará.

### Species missed

Besides the many bats, rodents, and marsupials missed because we could not trap, the two main misses were two monkey species.

The Blond Tity Monkey (*Callicebus barbarabrownae*) is very rare and occurs in remnant patches of Caatinga forest in Bahia state. We searched for it at a site where it has been recorded in the past (at 13°03'10"S, 38°15'45" W), but it was a very hot afternoon and nothing moved. Caio has seen it further south in Bahia state along the road from Lençóis to Remanso.

The other species missed was Black-striped Capuchin (*Sapajus libidinosus*), which is widespread in the drier parts of NE Brazil, but is suffering due to habitat destruction and hunting. One of Caio's friends had seen it visiting a pond near Morada Nova, but there had been some rain a few days prior to our visit and the monkeys were apparently drinking from small water sources in the forest.

And with apologies to the mammal purists, I had to add two of my favourite birds of the trip (Racket-tailed Coquette and Lear's Macaw):

