

Bolivia

September 19th - October 4th, 2025

Yonathan Perez



Trip Participants: Eduardo Ruiz, Jaime Rodriguez de Pablo, Yonathan Perez

I visited Bolivia in hopes to see many of the Neotropics' iconic animals without the Pantanal crowds, as well as the spectacular Salar de Uyuni and Bolivian Altiplano.

The itinerary was as follows:

19/09 La Paz

20-22/09 Salar de Uyuni and Bolivian Altiplano

23/09 Travel to Santa Cruz and visit the Botanical Gardens

24-25/09: Refugio Los Volcanos at Amboro National Park

26-30/09: Jaguarland

01-04/10: Kaa-Iya National Park

The Altiplano part of the trip was organized by [Andes Salt Expeditions](#), while the rest of the trip was organized by [Nick's Adventures Bolivia](#) - THE tour operator for wildlife excursions in Bolivia.

La Paz

I landed in La Paz in the early morning hours only to discover that my luggage didn't make it through my layover in Bogota. So my first and only day in La Paz was quite stressful as I spent a big chunk of it trying to replace the items from my missing luggage - in particular warm clothing for the high Andes part of the trip. I did manage to squeeze in a short visit to [Valle de la Luna](#) where Mountain Viscachas are occasionally seen, but I didn't see any.

Eventually, my luggage arrived at my hotel early in the next morning at the same time as my taxi to the airport for the next segment of the trip. Relieved, I continued to my flight to Uyuni with my luggage and a few more grey hairs.



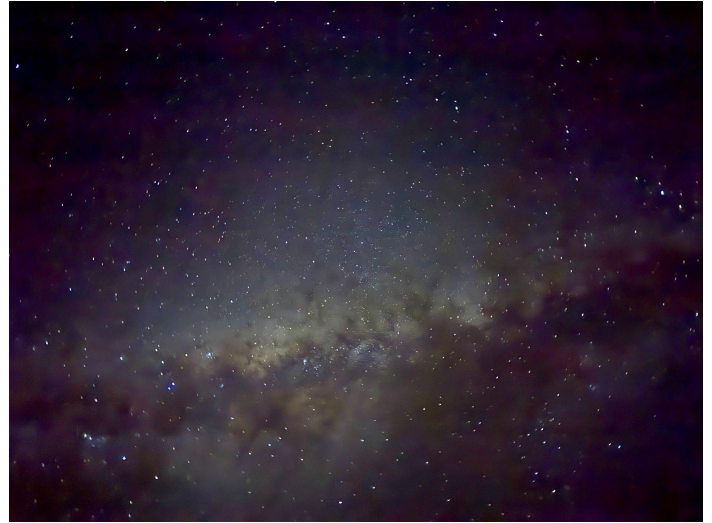
Salar de Uyuni and Bolivian Altiplano

After landing at Uyuni, I made it to Andes Salt Expeditions' office where I met Eduardo and Jaime before embarking on a 3D/2N tour to Salar de Uyuni and then south through high Andean desert landscapes to [Reserva Nacional de Fauna Andina Eduardo Awaora](#).

Highlights of the tour included perspective-bending photoshoots at the salt flats, Incawasi island - a large cactus-covered rock island in the middle of the salt flats, outlandish desert landscapes, flamingo-filled lagoons, and stunning starry desert skies.



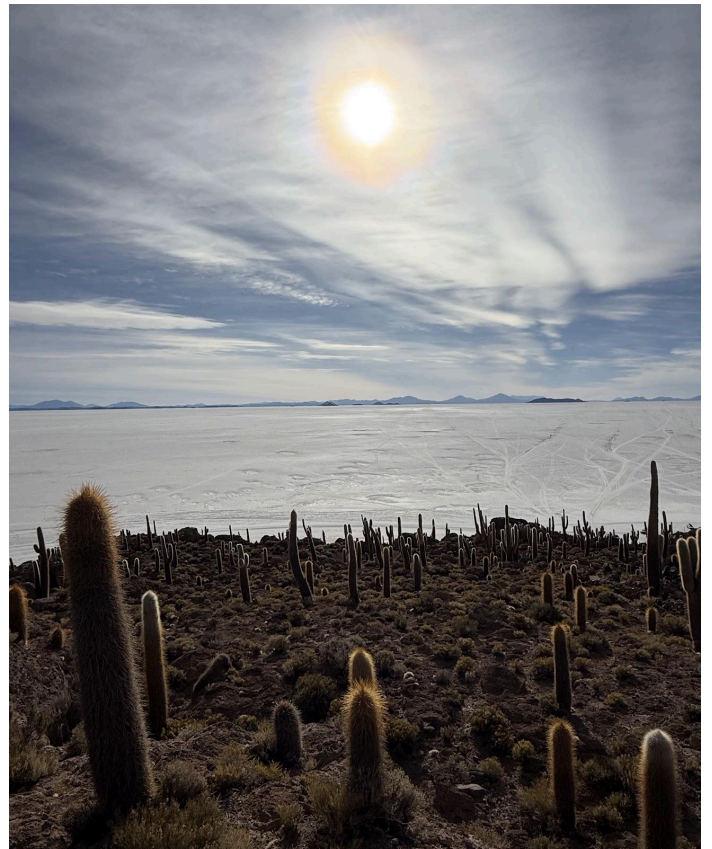
Wooden Rhino (introduced)



Starry desert skies



James's Flamingos



Incawasi island

While not a wildlife-focused trip, we did see some mammals: **Vicuñas** were common throughout, as were **Llamas** that were grazing freely in remote areas (though I assume they aren't entirely feral). We also saw **Common Mountain Viscachas** in several places - a couple at the edge of Incawasi island on the first day, a larger habituated group at a known stop (i.e. most tours stop there) in Siloli desert on the second day, and a couple more at a rock formation stop on the way back to Uyuni on the third day. Among the habituated Viscachas in Siloli desert were a few **Andean Soft-haired Mice**. Some notable birds seen during the tour were **James' Flamingo**, **Andean Flamingo**, **Chilean Flamingo**, **Lesser Rhea**, **Andean Goose**, and **Variable Hawk**.

Culpeo (Andean Fox) are commonly seen during these tours, and Andean Screaming Armadillos are also possible - but we missed those. Rarely, Andean Mountain Cats are also spotted - one was filmed killing a Viscacha in Siloli desert a few weeks prior, and another cat was photographed by the road a few kilometers north of [Laguna Colorada](#) on the very same day that we passed there. Nick might look for reliable spots for this species - so stay tuned!



Andean Soft-haired Mouse



Mountain Viscacha



Vicuñas



Variable Hawk



Andean Geese



Lesser Rhea enjoying some Vicuña-made snacks

Santa Cruz Botanical Gardens

I flew from Uyuni to Santa Cruz via La Paz in the morning, while Eduardo and Jaime made a longer stop in La Paz to explore the city. I planned for a day in the Botanical Gardens or Curichi reserve to look for monkeys (in particular the White-eared Titi). However, my day was cut short as Boliviana de Aviacion decided to put my luggage on a later flight from La Paz and made me wait by the luggage carousel for almost two hours.

After checking into my hotel it was too late to make it to Curichi as it closes at 16:00, so I opted to visit the [Botanical Gardens](#). The gardens officially close at 17:30, and they stop letting people in, but you can stay inside until 18:30 - or a bit after sunset. A 2.5 hour stroll in the gardens yielded a troop of **Hooded Capuchins**, two skittish **Black-tailed Marmosets** and a family of **South-American Coatis** in addition to my first **Yacare Caimens** and many birds. I also saw many bats of various shapes and sizes, but the only probable identifiable one was **Brazilian Free-tailed Bat**.

On my last day in Bolivia, after coming back from Kaa-Iya, I made another quick stop at the gardens arriving right before they closed, in a hail mary attempt to see White-eared Titis. I didn't see them, but a group of kids who were very

impressed with my camera pointed me to a female **Black-and-Gold Howler** that was feeding at a tree with two youngsters. I also saw a very large **Red-footed Tortoise**.



Black-and-Gold Howler



Red-footed Tortoise



The best area (according to Cezar) for White-eared Titi is marked



Brazilian Free-tailed Bat ? OG Batman-Signal ?

Refugio Los Volcanos - Amboro National Park

After breakfast, our guide Santiago with Nick's Adventures Bolivia picked the three of us from our hotel in Santa Cruz and we headed to [Refugio Los Volcanos](#) in Amboro National Park - a beautifully situated hotel in the middle of the jungle, surrounded by dramatic sheer cliffs. This isn't a mammal hotspot, but mostly known for the landscapes, hiking and birding. Our guide Santiago wasn't a wildlife specialist, but was a great guide for hiking, and always had a "yes and" attitude.



Upon our arrival we learned that a pair of **Harpy Eagles** have been seen daily in the last several days, and even landed on the trees by the rooms on one occasion. This meant that our main goal for this location was avian and not mammalian. None of us is a serious birder, but a Harpy is an exception.

After lunch we headed on our first hike to the Amboro trail - a long trail that ends in a waterfall that I assume is impressive in the wet season. But the forest views were spectacular. We didn't see the harpy nor any mammals on that hike, but saw many frogs and birds with a highlight being **Andean Condors** soaring above.

After dinner Eduardo and I went on a long night walk around the Refugio with Santiago and local guides from the Refugio. The walk was extremely uneventful, but as we returned to the hotel, we saw a **Mouse Opossum** crossing the road. According to the local staff, Nine-banded Armadillo, Paca and Crab-eating Fox are common at night around the Refugio - but we didn't see any.



Hooded Capuchin



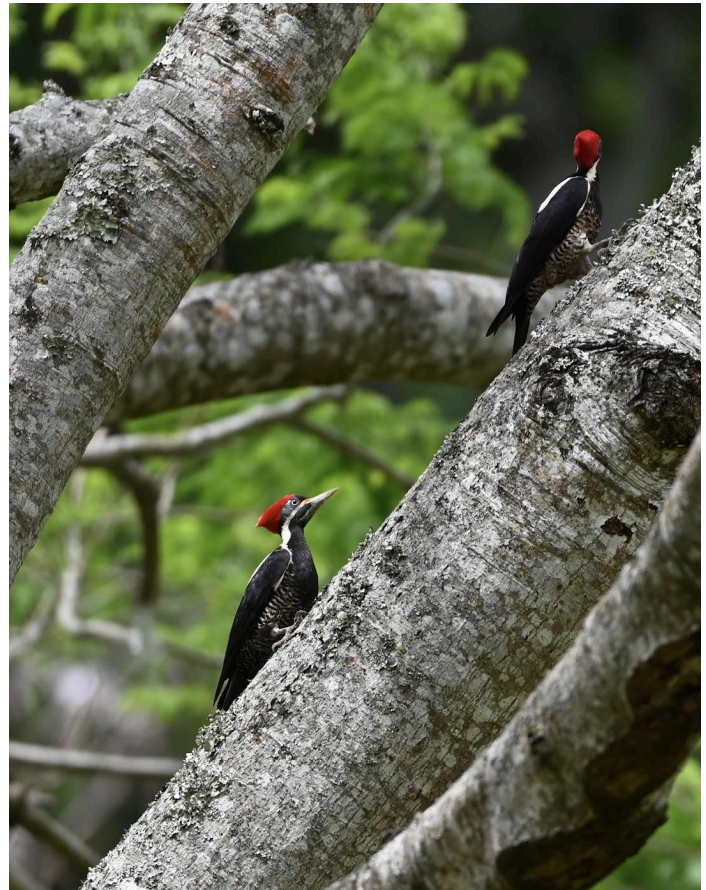
Salta Tree Frog

The next morning Santiago and Jaime went for a challenging hike to a lookout over the Refugio while Eduardo and I went with one of the local guides to the mirador on the Amboro trail as the local staff reckoned that would be our best hope to see the Harpy Eagles. We waited all morning at the mirador - entertained by a troop of **Hooded Capuchins**, flocks of parrots, soaring Condors and breathtaking views. We eventually saw the Harpy Eagles but they were soaring high above so we didn't get the view of a perching Harpy we were hoping for. Based on eBird reports, it seems that the eagles have moved on after our visit and the Refugio is not a reliable spot for them.

Back at the hotel grounds we saw a pair of **Southern Amazon Red Squirrels** and I had a glimpse of a skittish **Azara's Agouti** by the kitchen waste dump. Later in the afternoon, Jaime and Eduardo rested while I went with Santiago to hike the Loro trail where we saw **Military Macaws**. Afterwards we returned back to Santa Cruz for the night.



Military Macaw



Lineated Woodpeckers

Jaguarland

The next day Nick himself and our driver Cezar, who turned out to be a fantastic spotter and driver, picked us up from our hotel and we embarked on the long drive to Jaguarland, at the edge of the Amazon basin. Jaguarland has been described extensively in previous reports so I won't go into too much detail, but it is a large private property (~11,000 hectares) comprising a mixture of Soya fields, forest remnants and wetlands. We stayed for 5D/4N at Jaguarland, where a typical day consisted of an early morning drive (05:00-10:00), an afternoon drive (15:00-18:00) and a night drive (19:00-22:00). The accommodations are sort of glamping - large tents with beds and fans and fantastic food courtesy of Yetsi, our cook. The campsite location doesn't feel very wild as it is right next to a busy autoshop (needed for electricity), however it does host a large roost of **Chestnut-fronted Macaws** and seeing them flock at dusk is lovely.

Bird life at Jaguarland is abundant and full of iconic species such as [Toco Toucan](#), [Blue-and-Yellow Macaw](#), [Red-and-Green Macaw](#), [Jabiru](#), [Great Potoo](#), [Bare-faced Curassow](#), [Razor-bill Curassaw](#), [Greater Rheas](#), Owls, Hawks and many aquatic birds.



Blue-and-Yellow Macaws



Jabiru



Chestnut-fronted Macaws



Toco Toucan

The mammals definitely required more work and oftentimes we had long hours of driving between sightings and many of the sightings were distant and/or brief. However, by the end of our visit we did manage to see a nice list of species. In order of appearance:

- **Bolivian Red Howler:** Seen enroute to Jaguarland, as well as on 6 drives in Jaguarland.



- **Jaguar:** We had a total of 6 sightings. The first 3 sightings were poor - a glimpse of a back of a juvenile Jaguar disappearing in thick vegetation on our first drive as we entered Jaguarland, a very distant Jaguar in a field the next morning (it was barely visible even with binoculars), and a glimpse of a tail disappearing in the bushes the morning after. It was only on our very last drive that we struck gold with three sightings - two good but distant sightings (good views with binoculars) and one excellent (albeit brief) sighting of a large male we surprised at a ditch on the side of the road.



Jaguar #5



Jaguar #4



Jaguar #6

- **Capybara:** Seen on all drives. Probably a dozen or so on each drive.



- **Marsh Deer:** Seen on 8 drives. Usually quite distant, but we had one good sighting of a near individual.



- **Collared Peccary:** Brief sightings on 2 drives.



- **Brown Capuchin:** Seen on 4 drives, as well as on our way back to Santa Cruz.



- **Lowland Tapir:** A brief sighting on our first night drive.



- **Crab-eating Fox:** Seen on all night drives, as well as at dawn and dusk at the beginning and end of day drives. One was seen with a rodent in its mouth.



- **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth:** Seen on 5 drives as well as on our way back to Santa Cruz.



- **Greater Bulldog Bat:** Seen attracted to the lights at the campsite, as well as on one night drive.
- **Lesser Bulldog Bat:** Seen attracted to the lights at the campsite.
- **Ocelot:** 3 individuals seen on our second night drive and one briefly on the third night drive.



Photo: Eduardo Ruiz

- **Giant Anteater:** A brilliant surprise sighting of an individual crossing the road one afternoon.



- **Azara's Night Monkey:** A family of these adorable primates lives in a tree grove close to the campsite, but are very tricky to find. Seen twice on night drives and once early morning.



- **Black-capped Squirrel Monkey:** A large troop seen by the road on one morning drive.



- **Red Brocket Deer:** Seen once on our last night drive.
- **Jaguarundi:** Seen crossing the road one morning during a stop, but only by Nick and Cezar. Missed by all trip participants. Jaguarland is still probably one of the better places to see this cat, but it is quite difficult to see. There isn't a good way to see them other than driving on roads with tall grassy edges and hoping for one to cross the road.
- **Six-banded Armadillo:** A very distant individual seen by everyone but me. It was sprinting across the road on our way out of Jaguarland.

We also saw some reptiles: abundant **Yacare Caimans**, **Argentine Black-and-White Tegus**, two **False Water Cobras** (one was peeking out of a hole in the ground), two **Yellow-bellied Liphoids** on night drives, **Yellow-headed Sideneck Turtles** and **Giant South American River Turtles**. No Beni Anacondas unfortunately.



Yacare Caiman



False Water Cobra



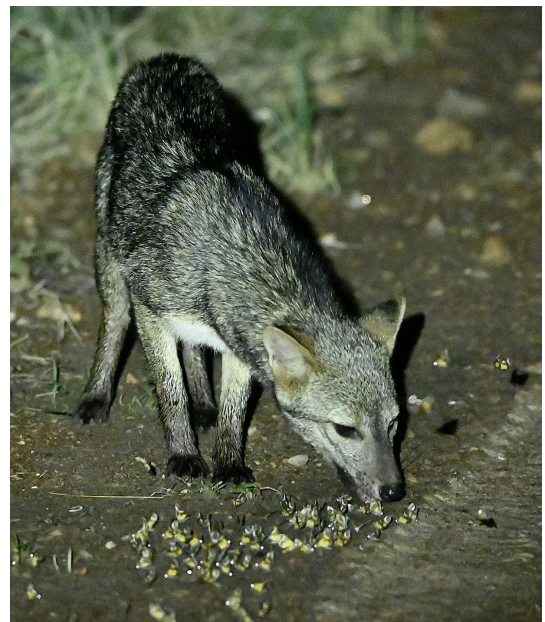
Giant South American River Turtle

Kaa-Iya National Park

Our next destination was a 4D/3N visit to Kaa-Iya National Park. Our guide for this part was Maria and our driver was Cezar again who knows Kaa-Iya extremely well. At over 34,000 square kms, Kaa-Iya is the largest national park in Bolivia (larger than Belgium) and contains mostly dry Chaco habitat. However, only a few roads at the north of the park are accessible. The accommodation is a dilapidated ranger station that is very basic, but has a fully functional kitchen, AC and some nice wildlife onsite.

We had pretty bad luck with the weather and experienced unusually cold temperatures and heavy rains that turned the roads into a muddy mess. As a result, we were limited in how far from the ranger station we could venture. The typical daily schedule consisted of morning, afternoon, and night game drives. However the schedule changed frequently to account for the weather. Due to the wet weather, mammal activity was low, but herping was great - I have never seen and heard so many frogs! We saw the following mammal species (in order of appearance):

- **Crab-eating Fox:** Several individuals encountered on all but one game drive, as well as on our way to the park and around the ranger station. One interesting sighting was a fox feasting on butterflies after the rain.



- **Tayra**: We stopped to watch a **Red-legged Seriema** on the access road to the park when a Tayra darted across the road very close to where I was standing.



- **Azara's Agouti**: Distant individuals seen as we entered the park and on one morning drive.
- **Black-tailed Marmoset**: 3 marmosets seen only by me as I was walking around the perimeter of the ranger station.



- **Pale Titi:** Seen by the ranger station and also on 4 drives. This is the first Titi species I've seen and now I'm hooked. These tail-holding real-life Labubus are adorable!



- **Tapeti:** Seen on 4 drives - always after dark.



- **Chaco Pericote** (probable): Seen on one night drive.



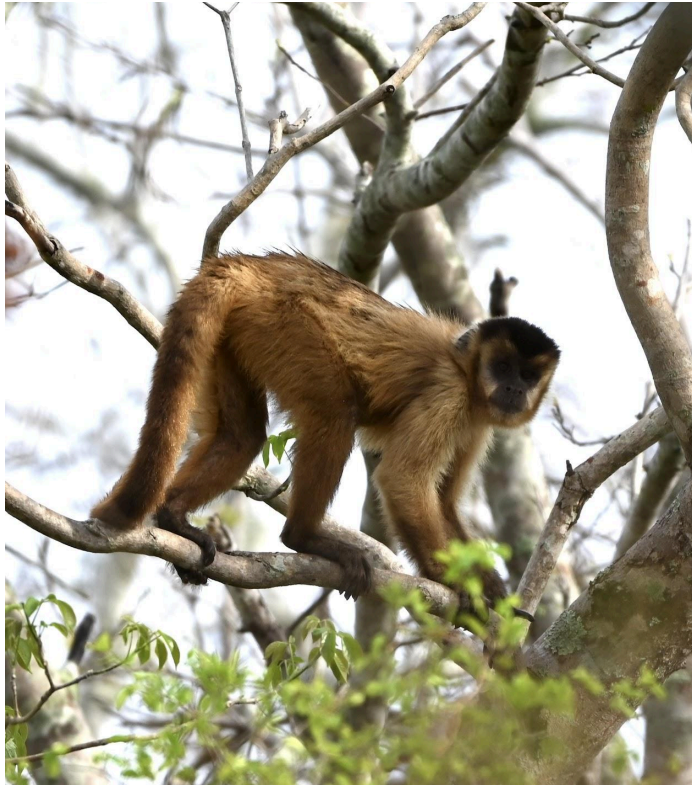
- **Southern Brown Brocket**: Seen on 6 drives.



- **Chacoan Peccary**: Distant individuals seen on 2 morning drives.



- **Ocelot:** One seen quickly crossing the road on our second night drive.
- **Hooded Capuchin:** A small troop seen on one morning drive.



- **Brazilian Cavy:** One seen on one morning drive.
- **Jaguarundi:** A distant individual seen leisurely crossing the road on one morning drive. This was one of the main targets of the trip, and I'm very glad to have seen it even if the sighting was anti-climatic as it was so far away.



- **Foster's / Paraguayan Punare:** A fantastic sighting of this species in a rocky outcrop by the road on our last night drive.



- **Capybara:** A large group seen in a pond on the side of the road on the way back to Santa Cruz.
- **Collared Peccary:** A distant small group seen only by Cezar behind the car as the rest of us tried to approach the Jaguarundi by foot.
- **Lowland Tapir:** A very brief encounter with a back of a tapir disappearing in the forest. I missed it unfortunately, but the rest saw it.

Birding was not very exciting (definitely compared to Jaguarland!) but we did see two **Tropical Screech Owls** and a **Great Horned Owl**. Herping highlights included **Cranwell's Horned Frog**, **Muller's Termite Frog**, **Budget's Frog**, an angry **Neotropical Rattlesnake**, **Red-footed Tortoise**, **Chaco Tortoise**, a few colubrid snakes, and many lizards and frogs.



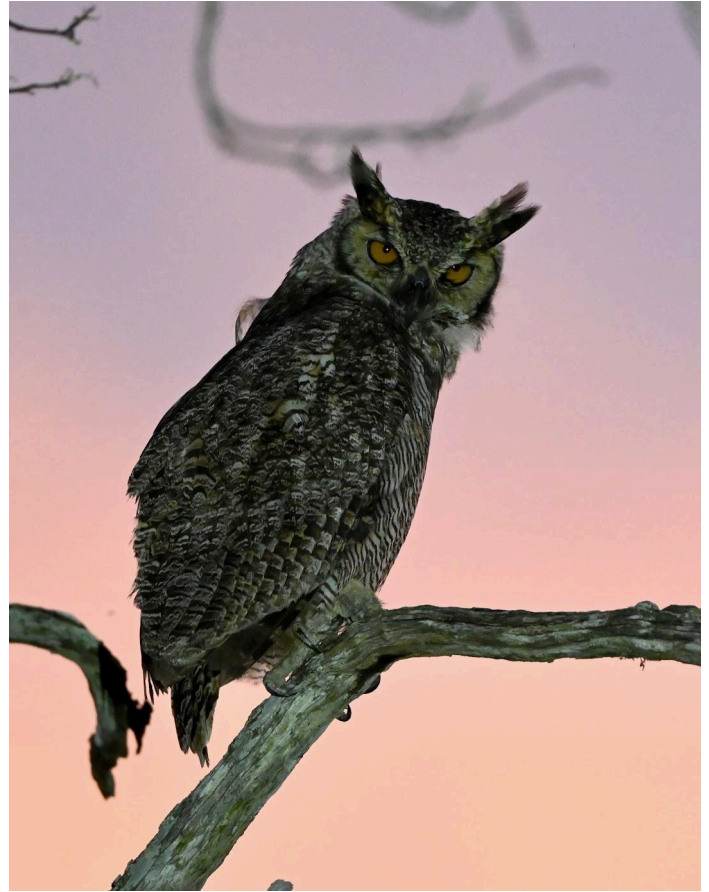
Neotropical Rattlesnake



Cranwell's Horned Frog



Red-legged Seriema



Great Horned Owl

Stuff we Missed

The most notable miss for me was the White-eared Titi. Santa Cruz is the best place in the world to see this near-endemic monkey (even though it's not very easy apparently), and I should have added an extra day in Santa Cruz to look for it.

The Bolivian River Dolphins that used to be seen in a lagoon at Jaguarland have since been relocated, so Jaguarland is no longer a good place to see them, and one would need to venture to Trinidad for them.

I hoped to see at least one or two Armadillo species.

We also missed Puma in Kaa Iya as well as a few more rarely seen species.

While we did see most species I expected to see, many of the sightings were distant and/or brief. I'm not sure if it is poaching, wildfires, or trauma from Tomer Ben-Yehuda's visit the previous week, but the general feeling was that mammals in Bolivia were quite skittish - more so than other wildlife destinations I have visited.

Thanks

Special Thanks to Eduardo and Jaime for being such great travel companions, and especially to Eduardo who organized the trip and assembled the crew ; To Nick and his crew for the guiding and the impeccable organization and especially to our rockstar driver Cezar ; To Venkat Sankar with help identifying rodents ; And to Tomer Ben-Yehuda and his group who did an extended version of this trip shortly before us and provided insights and remote mental support 😊

Trip Species List

Mammals

1. Giant Anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*)
2. Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*)
3. Six-banded Armadillo (*Euphractus sexcinctus*) - not by me :(
4. Common Tapeti (*Sylvilagus brasiliensis*)
5. Brown Capuchin (*Sapajus apella*)
6. Hooded Capuchin (*Sapajus cay*)
7. Black-capped Squirrel Monkey (*Saimiri boliviensis*)
8. Pale Titi (*Plecturocebus pallescens*)
9. Black-and-Gold Howler (*Alouatta caraya*)
10. Bolivian Red Howler (*Alouatta sara*)
11. Azara's Night Monkey (*Aotus azarae*)
12. Black-tailed Marmoset (*Mico melanurus*)
13. Southern Amazon Red Squirrel (*Sciurus spadiceus*)
14. Brazilian Guinea Pig (*Cavia aperea*)
15. Greater Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*)
16. Azara's Agouti (*Dasyprocta azarae*)
17. Common Mountain Viscacha (*Lagidium viscacia*)
18. Foster's Punare (*Thrichomys fosteri*)
19. Andean Soft-haired Mouse (*Abrothrix andina*)
20. Chaco Pericote (*Graomys chacoensis*) - probable
21. Souther Brown Brocket (*Subulo gouazoubira*)
22. Northwestern Red Brocket (*Mazama americana*)
23. Marsh Deer (*Blastocerus dichotomus*)
24. Collared Peccary (*Dicotyles tajacu*)
25. Chacoan Peccary (*Parachoerus wagneri*)
26. Llama (*Lama glama*) - Domesticated, but native to the area and in semi-feral state.
27. Vicuña (*Lama vicugna*)
28. Brazilian Free-tailed Bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) - probable
29. Lesser Bulldog Bat (*Noctilio albiventris*) - probable
30. Greater Bulldog Bat (*Noctilio leporinus*)
31. South American Coati (*Nasua nasua*)
32. Tayra (*Eira barbara*)
33. Jaguarundi (*Herpailurus yagouaroundi*)
34. Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*)
35. Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)
36. Crab-eating Fox (*Cerdocyon thous*)
37. Lowland Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*)
38. Mouse Opossum species (*Marmosa / Marmosops* sp.)

Unfortunately, several rodents and bats remain unidentified.

Birds

1. Great Potoo
2. Glittering-bellied Emerald
3. Andean Swift
4. Smooth-billed Ani
5. Guira Cuckoo
6. Rufous-tailed Jacamar
7. Lineated Woodpecker
8. Chestnut-eared Aracari
9. Toco Toucan
10. Turquoise-fronted Amazon
11. Red-and-Green Macaw
12. Blue-and-Yellow Macaw
13. Military Macaw
14. Chestnut-fronted Macaw
15. Scaly-headed Parrot
16. Blue-headed Parrot



Great Potoo

17. Green-cheeked Parakeet
18. Cobalt-winged Parakeet
19. Yellow-chevroned Parakeet
20. Cliff Parakeet
21. Blue-crowned Parakeet
22. Tropical Screech Owl
23. Burrowing Owl
24. Great Horned Owl
25. American Barn Owl
26. White-bellied Nothura
27. Grey Tinamou
28. Puna Tinamou
29. Collared Trogon
30. Ringed Kingfisher
31. Green Kingfisher
32. Amazon Kingfisher
33. Rock Pigeon
34. Picazuro Pigeon
35. Spot-winged Pigeon
36. Plumbeous Pigeon
37. Grey-fronted Dove
38. Bare-faced Ground Dove
39. Eared Dove
40. Picui Ground Dove
41. Plain-breasted Ground Dove
42. Blue Ground Dove
43. Ruddy Ground Dove
44. Greater Rhea
45. Lesser Rhea
46. Maguari Stork
47. Jabiru
48. Plumbeous Rail
49. Grey-cowled Wood Rail
50. Giant Coot
51. Paint-billed Crake
52. Common Gallinule
53. Limpkin
54. Andean Condor
55. Turkey Vulture
56. Greater Yellow-headed Vulture
57. Black Vulture
58. Bare-faced Curassow
59. Razor-billed Curassow
60. Spix's Guan
61. Speckled Chachalaca



Burrowing Owl



Greater Rhea

62. Chaco Chachalaca
63. White-throated Piping Guan
64. Baird's Sandpiper
65. Solitary Sandpiper
66. Lesser Yellowlegs
67. Andean Gull
68. Wattled Jacana
69. Southern Lapwing
70. Collared Plover
71. Black-necked Stilt
72. Andean Avocet
73. Bare-faced Ibis
74. Puna Ibis
75. White-faced Ibis
76. Buff-necked Ibis
77. Green Ibis
78. Rufescent Tiger Heron
79. Least Bittern
80. Little Blue Heron
81. Snowy Egret
82. Great Egret
83. Western Cattle Egret
84. Cocoi Heron
85. Black-capped Night Heron
86. Striated Heron
87. Whistling Heron
88. Capped Heron
89. Chilean Flamingo
90. Andean Flamingo
91. James's Flamingo
92. Aplomado Falcon
93. American Kestrel
94. Crested Caracara
95. Yellow-headed Caracara
96. Chimango Caracara
97. Mountain Caracara
98. Scissor-tailed Nightjar
99. Nacunda Nighthawk
100. Common Pauraque
101. Rufous Nightjar
102. Little Nightjar
103. Southern Screamer
104. Andean Goose
105. Orinoco Goose
106. Black-bellied Whistling-Duck



Great Black Hawk

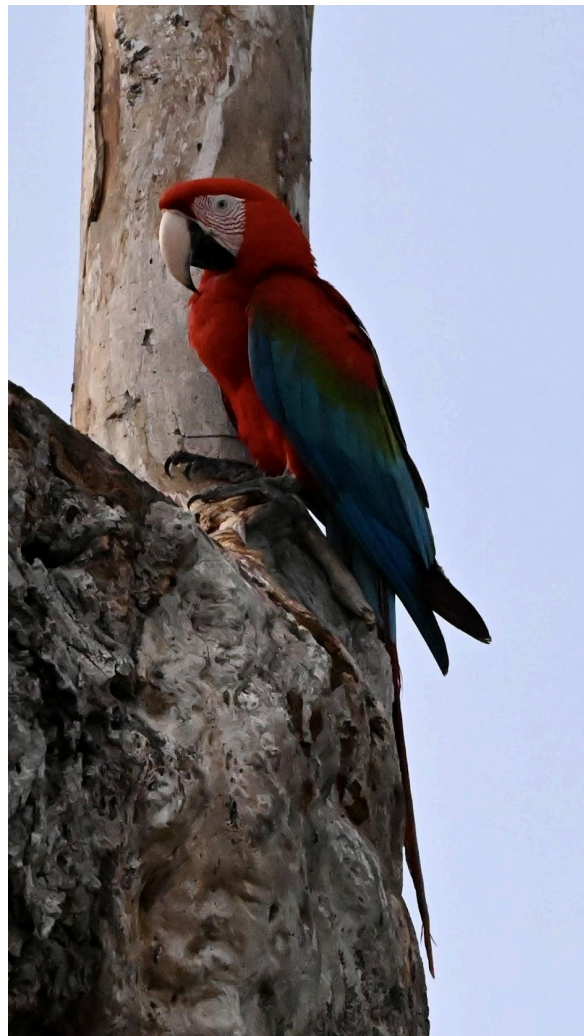


Tropical Screech Owl

107. Yellow-billed Teal
108. Muscovy Duck
109. Crested Duck
110. Brazilian Teal
111. Osprey
112. Swallow-tailed Kite
113. Harpy Eagle
114. Bicolored Hawk
115. Roadside Hawk
116. Grey-lined Hawk
117. Savanna Hawk
118. Great Black Hawk
119. Black-collared Hawk
120. Snail Kite
121. Crane Hawk
122. Plumbeous Kite
123. Variable Hawk
124. Red-legged Seriema
125. Sunbittern
126. Neotropic Cormorant
127. Anhinga
128. Puna Miner
129. Striped Woodcreeper
130. Rufous Hornero
131. Rusty-vented Canastero
132. Grey-chested Martin
133. Crested Oropendula
134. Shiny Cowbird
135. Giant Cowbird
136. Chopi Blackbird
137. House Sparrow
138. Rufous-bellied Thrush
139. Chiguanco Thrush
140. Rufous-collared Sparrow
141. Brown-backed Mockingbird
142. Sayaca Tanager
143. Black-hooded Sierra Finch
144. Greenish Yellow Finch
145. Red-backed Sierra Finch
146. Purplish Jay
147. Plush-crested Jay
148. Rufous-naped Ground Tyrant
149. Spot-billed Ground Tyrant
150. Vermilion Flycatcher
151. Fork-tailed Flycatcher



Rufous-tailed Jacamar



Red-and-Green Macaw

152. Great Kiskadee
153. Black Phoebe
154. Black-backed Water-Tyrant
155. Andean Negrito
156. Tropical Kingbird



Snail Kite

Herps

1. Yacare Caiman
2. Black Lava Lizard
3. Giant Ameiva
4. Argentine Black-and-White Tegu
5. Four-toed Tegu
6. Tropical House Gecko
7. False water Cobra
8. Yellow-bellied Liphois
9. Chaco Racer
10. Green Racer species
11. Neotropical Rattlesnake
12. Yellow-headed Sideneck Turtle
13. Giant South American River Turtle
14. Red-footed Tortoise
15. Chacoan Tortoise
16. Salta Tree Frog
17. Cane Toad
18. Cranwell's Horned Frog
19. Budgett's Frog
20. Muller's Termite Frog



Muller's Termite Frog



Budgett's Frog



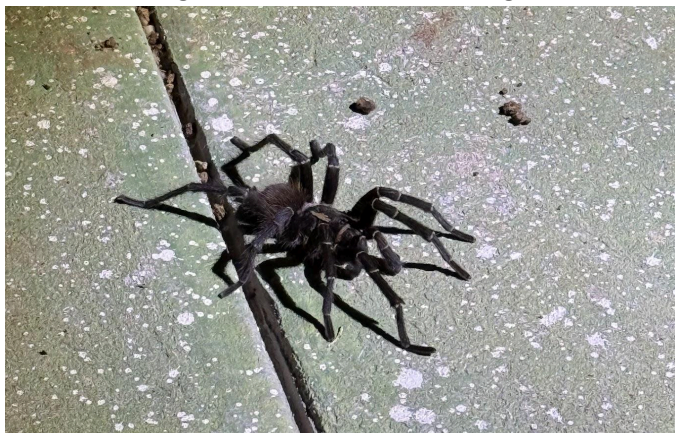
Toco Toucans



Grey-lined Hawk



Argentine Black-and-White Tegu



Our neighborhood Tarantula



Black-collared Hawk