



My Big Cat Year – Visit to Bolivia for the South American Wildcat species – 14/08/26 to 04/09/26

As part of **The Big Cat Year**, we made a visit to **Bolivia** to several areas. It started with a **14-day trip** with a group with Wise Birding and lead by Nick's Adventures Bolivia to Kaa Iya Np, Jaguarland and Trinidad. I then went on my own, partly also organized by Nick's Adventures Bolivia, to Barba Azul Nature Reserve, Trinidad again and Bosque del Jose, near Amboro NP. Main focus during the trip were the Jaguar, Ocelot, Puma, Jaguarundi, Geoffrey's Cat (small chance in Kaa Iya NP), Pantanal Cat (we had it last year around Trinidad) and the Margay (extremely difficult but we tried at Bosque del Jose).

All in all, we managed to see **36 mammal species**, around **163 bird species** and **8 Reptiles and Amphibians!**

With regard to the mammals, the highlights for me were **Ocelot, Jaguar, Puma, Pampas Fox, Three-banded Armadillo, Collared Peccary, Azari's Night Monkey, Bolivian Red Howler, Pale Titi, Black-capped Capuchin Monkey, Black-tailed Marmoset, Crab-eating Raccoon, Greater Grison, Lowland Tapir, Southern Tamandua, Northern Black-eared Opossum, Black-and-gold Howler Monkey, Brown Capuchin Monkey, Maned Wolf, Lowland Paca, Common Fat-tailed Opossum, Bare-tailed Woolly Opossum.**

Bird highlights for me were **White-bellied Nothura, Tataupa Tinamou, Bat Falcon, Bare-faced Curassow, Sunbittern, King Vulture, Blue-and-yellow Macaw, Red-and-green Macaw, Great Potoo, American Barn Owl, Striped Owl, Nacunda Nighthawk. Ash-throated Crake, Sharp-tailed Tyrant, White-rumped Monjita, White-rumped Tanager, Orange-backed Troupial, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Blue-throated Macaw, Razor-billed Curassow, Yellow Collared Macaw, Common Potoo.**

Top 5 Mammals	Top 5 Birds	Top 5 Wildlife moments
Puma	Blue-throated Macaw	A Puma at 5 An on my own in Barba Azul
Jaguar	Razor-billed Currassow	An Ocelot who approached the car
Ocelot	Bare-faced Currassow	A Jaguar at night in the Soya Fields
Maned Wolf	Orange-backed Troupial	Discovering mammals in the dark at Barba Azul
Lowland Paca	Common Potoo	A Maned Wolf jumping off the track

The trip to Bolivia was a hard one for me, covering many different areas and a lot of km by air and road. I love the country and its people and last year I had been here and had a very successful month. This year we had to work even harder to get some results but in the end we got Jaguar, Ocelot and Puma and many other interesting wildlife. Also on behalf of The Big Cat Year, we have made a donation both to Armonia Bolivia and Bosque de José. Currently I am at 21 Wildcat species for the year and 25 in life.





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A very challenging trip to Bolivia

The next trip on the calendar was **Bolivia**. As I was there already for a month in [September/October 2025](#), I was really looking forward to it. This is certainly because it has many great wildcat species. The trip would be with [Wise Birding](#), a UK-based niche company; they are very passionate about wildlife all over the world and the company is run by Chris Townend (who had been very supportive of me from the beginning towards My Big Cat Year). Unfortunately, Chris could not join us himself, and instead Paul French joined as tour leader from [Wise Birding](#).

Locally, it would be organized by [Nick's Adventures Bolivia](#), run by Nick McPhee—a company well known for organizing trips to see Wildcat species in Bolivia. Last year we did a trip with Nick and it is great fun to travel with him, so I was looking forward to meeting him again.

The itinerary would be 4 days in **Kaa Iya NP**, 3 days in **Jaguarland**, and 2 days around **Trinidad**. Adding in some travel days, the trip would start on the 14th of August, arriving in Santa Cruz, and end on the 26th in Santa Cruz. I would then separately continue with 3 days in **Barba Azul Nature Reserve**, 2 days in **Trinidad**, and 3 days in a refuge in **Amboro**. In terms of the Wildcat species, my focus for the different areas would be:

Kaa Iya NP – **Ocelot, Jaguar, Puma, Jaguarundi, and Geoffroy's Cat (rare)**

Jaguarland – **Jaguar, Ocelot, Puma, Jaguarundi**

Barba Azul – **Puma, Ocelot, Jaguarundi**

Trinidad – **Pantanal Cat**

Amboro – **Margay**

So, on the 14th of August, I made my way from China to Bolivia. In Chengdu, at 02:00 AM, I got on the flight from Chengdu to Doha (arriving 04:30, departing 08:25), to Sao Paulo (arriving 17:05, departing 18:35), to Santa Cruz (arriving 20:25), Bolivia. In Chengdu, they could only label my bag to Sao Paulo, so I was supposed to pick it up and check in all in 1½ hours. I said I would miss my flight in Sao Paulo as there was just not enough time. I moved heaven and earth; however, they simply could not through-check it to Santa Cruz. After 10 minutes or so, I realized it was not a matter of not being willing to do it, but they simply were not allowed. I left it at that and realized I would probably have a serious problem at Sao Paulo. Upon arriving in Doha, I texted Paul from Wise Birding and explained the situation. He understood and we left it at that, stating that perhaps I could still make the connection.





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So arriving at Sao Paulo, everything went wrong. The plane did arrive on time at 17:00 but was far out on the runway. So before we were offloaded from the plane into the buses, it was 17:25. When I arrived running at the luggage belt, it was 17:40.... When I got my luggage from the belt, it was 18:45!!! Clearly missing the flight to Santa Cruz which had already left at 18:35.

To cut a long story short, Qatar Airways was extremely helpful and booked me on the flight at 23:30 to Santiago in Chile, arriving there at 04:30 AM, and at 06:30 I was on a flight which had a stop in La Paz and then continued to Santa Cruz, arriving there at 11:15 AM. It was certainly the longest flight I have had in the last two years with the most stopovers, i.e., 4, before arriving at my destination.

Anyway, I was there and Nick picked me up from the airport and drove 7 hours to **Kaa Iya NP**. We talked for over two hours but then I got tired and slept most of the remaining time, making Nick jealous of me sleeping so easily in a car. When we arrived at Kaa Iya NP, the others were still out on a drive so I had some more time to rest and make myself comfortable in the most basic room you could imagine (and in which I already stayed last year). But there is just no other accommodation. It is a kind of a barrack next to the entrance of the NP. But for me, it is fine; it is safe and clean and that is all I need.

That evening we had dinner and I was able to meet my fellow travellers **Sandra and Barry, Grant, Ray, Fiona, and the Wise Birding tour leader Paul.** Also present were the guides and drivers **Jose, Mauricio** (both of whom I knew already from last year and it was good to see them again), and **Caesar.** Our cook was Aldo, who was assisted by an aide.

With regard to my fellow travellers:



- **Sandra and Barry;** Sandra has been following my progress on social media and she has been one of my most enthusiastic followers, so it was great to meet her. She is very much into wildlife and especially the Wildcat species. Just like her partner Barry, who is also very keen on birds. They have a business in native UK flowers with the mission and ambition to have people and organizations plant more native flowers. What a great initiative!!





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- **Grant**; a commercial director of a real estate company in the UK, very much into wildlife and especially keen on birds.
- **Ray**; a pensioner who has worked a great deal of his life at a workers' union. Has travelled the world and is very much into mammals.
- **Fiona**; who has done all kinds of different things and is keen on wildlife as well.
- **Paul**; a very keen birder with great knowledge of birds. Has made a career out of his hobby and has done a lot of work in the area of ornithology, having worked at Fair Isle and the South Georgia Island. Two places I visited last year, so it was also nice to have a chat about those interesting locations.

A good bunch of people with lots of experience, so together with some great guides we **should be able to get a lot of mammals out there, and especially the Wildcat species.**

How little did I know at the time how things would work out totally differently from my expectations....

Kaa Iya NP, a very exciting place which has only one straight 120-km sand road. It is basically a road once built for a gas pipeline which runs through the northern part. The whole area is about 34,000 square km, more than three-quarters of the Netherlands, my home country. I love the place as it is very challenging and can be very surprising. Last year, I was unlucky as I only had a distant view of an **Ocelot** while the other car had **2 Jaguars** at less than 10 meters from the car and a distant **Jaguarundi**. My hopes were high and I was hoping for **Jaguar**, **Ocelot** and especially a **Puma** as they are regularly seen. It is also good for **Jaguarundi** and you do have a very slim chance for a **Geoffroy's Cat**. We would have four nights, three full days in Kaa Iya NP, so that should give some results.



The next morning, the 16th of August, we were off at 05:30 AM in Kaa Iya NP. The first hour you drive in the dark and slowly you see the sunrise in this magical place. I prefer to sit on top of the car so you have a clear view ahead and can spot wildlife in time. A big advantage is my Kite Optics binoculars. They have a magnification of 18x and a stabilizer which gives a very stable view, even from a driving car. I bought them last year as I was 3 months on the ocean and that's what they are specifically designed for. However, especially in Kaa Iya NP, they work extremely well.





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I was on **top of the car, together with guide Caesar**. He has the sharpest eyes of all the guides, so it was good to be there with him. Also good to practice my Spanish. We were out for 25 minutes or so when Caesar spotted with his flashlight something very far on the right



side of the road. I put my binoculars on it but could not find what he was looking at. But suddenly I spotted on the left side of the road a Jaguar, or so I thought. It was walking away from us so we did not see the eyeshine and Caesar did not immediately find it. But after a

few seconds, the cat was crossing the road sideways and all could see it now. **It wasn't a Jaguar but an Ocelot**. From the back, I was misled by the size and misjudged it originally as a Jaguar. When it crossed the road, it stood still for 1 or 2 seconds and I managed to get a few decent shots. Nice!! What a great start!!!



We also got some **Crab-eating Foxes, Black-tailed Marmosets, Common Brocket Deer, and Pale Titis**. Great were a group of **Collared Peccaries** next to the road. We could hear them very well but they never showed themselves; only one animal I could see from the top of the car. Interesting birds were the **Red-legged Seriemas** (on our way in, the previous day

towards Kaa Iya NP), **Crane Hawk, Tropical Screech Owl, Turquoise-fronted Amazon, and two very nice Bat Falcons**.

Around 10 or 11 AM we returned and had breakfast followed by some rest and a lunch at around 15:00. Around 15:30 we went out again until 18:30, came back for dinner, and around 20:00 we went out again until 22:30. That was the rhythm most of the days so that we would maximize our time on the road.





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During the night drive we had **another Ocelot**; this time it came walking towards us and we had some great views.

The next day, the 17th, we went out again with Nick and Jose to the airstrip, a **place good for Jaguarundis**. We waited there for half an hour and scanned the strip and the road. **Suddenly, an Ocelot showed itself well** on the grass next to the airstrip. Not bad, three Ocelots in two days! But we wanted more and were **especially eager for the Jaguar, Jaguarundi, Puma, Tayra, and the Chacoan Peccary**. No luck yet, but the other car had **their first Puma sighting**; it crossed the road and all had a glimpse of this majestic Wildcat species. We had lunch and some rest and went out again in the late afternoon and after dinner for a night drive. A schedule that would repeat itself in the coming days.

The next day we were out again, now with Caesar and Mauricio. Caesar was always on top of the car and there was room for one other person, so we took turns. We did not get that much that day, although the **Three-banded Armadillo** was new for me. At dinner it turned out that the other car had an **amazing Puma sighting**! It showed itself very well, they could even follow it on foot and before it took off into the bushes, it looked at the group and they all had amazing footage!! What a great observation!!

On the last day in Kaa Iya we were out with Nick again and pushed hard to get some good mammals. We spent a lot of time in the part where the **Puma** had been sighted, but no luck yet.





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On the last morning we tried again but the rain started to pour down and we had to go back and pack our stuff. As soon as we left the staff office, a **Pampas Fox** showed itself on the terrain which was a nice bonus.

For me, the **Ocelot** was a great sighting but all in all, unfortunately Kaa Iya NP was tough for me and it was unfortunate that **we did not have a Puma sighting while the other car had two. But that's all in the game; it just happens and it is unavoidable.**

We took off after breakfast and had a 7-hour drive ahead to **Santa Cruz** where we stayed in the nice and comfortable Hampton by Hilton hotel. We had a good rest and a warm shower and next morning we were off at 8 AM to Jaguarland. Nick had already left earlier with his car as he had to set up a few things at **Jaguarland** before our arrival. Halfway through the trip, I got a text message from Nick containing **a video with a Jaguarundi which passed the road** and went into the fields. Wow! The remainder of the trip I was even on more alert and used my Kite Optics (18 x magnification with stabilizer) to scan the road ahead.

It felt good to be back in Jaguarland. Nick had made a few upgrades to the camp, i.e., tents were in the shade and there was an additional and separate toilet/shower unit. But everything else was the same and you basically camp in tents close to a farm. There is no hunting on Jaguarland so there is lots of wildlife and they normally don't flee directly when they are observed. It is famous for its **Jaguars** and, unlike the Pantanal, you are the only ones out there so there are no other cars or people.

Last year I had three great Jaguar sightings and a jumping Ocelot. Interesting to see what this year would bring!!

To cut a long story short, I was in the 'wrong' car during Jaguarland!!!





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Every day as a group, you change to a different car with a different driver so that you all will have the same guides and drivers over the trip. One car was led by Nick and driver Jose and the other by Guide Caesar and Guide/driver Mauricio. My group was with Grant, Paul, and Ray and the other group was with Sandra, Barry, and Fiona.



After 2 days, our group had not seen a Wildcat species yet... while the other group had three super **Jaguar** sightings (one was a female with a cub) and three different **Jaguarundi** observations!!! And we had zero... normally I keep my spirits high and I remain positive but I noticed after two days that it became more difficult and in my head I was even negative. The disappointing experience for me in Kaa Iya NP did not help. What may have also contributed to the stress in my head is that I am getting more and more into the real challenge of seeing as many of the Wildcat species as possible in one year. Although that was the challenge from day 1 onwards, I notice that the pressure increases and that the numbers are starting to matter!!

At our last day, during the afternoon drive, we got our first **Jaguar**! Caesar spotted it; it was lying down on the edges of one of the soya fields. It was quite far away and that was probably the reason that we made too much noise and movement (thinking it did not matter as it was so far out) and caused the **Jaguar** to make its way into the bushes. But we got it!!!





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During the night drive it even got better, cruising through the soya fields and approaching a crossing. Grant suddenly noticed a big mammal on his thermal! And there it was, a **Jaguar 25 meters in front of the car**. It followed the road for 10 meters or so and then made its way into one of the pockets of forest next to the soya fields. Mauricio quickly made a decision to go left at the crossing to see if it would come out of the forest. We waited for 5 minutes or so and then it came out and started crossing the soya fields. What a sight!! That night we slept well with **two Jaguars that day!**





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The following morning we had a very early breakfast and went out for the last drive. I jumped into Nick's car and sat on top of the roof, assuming that we would switch cars. However, that didn't happen and Grant, Ray, and Paul sat on the other car and I was with Sandra, Barry, and Fiona. I said to Grant, who was on top of the other car, "this is interesting, I am the only one in another car, let's see what happens!".

We had a nice drive but didn't see that much. Upon returning to the camp, I found out that **the others had seen a Puma moving through the soya fields**. I was happy for them and congratulated them but also thought to myself that it is what it is; it added to the feeling that it was not my most fortunate trip so far!!!

We arrived in **Santa Cruz** that day and the following morning we would have a flight at 09:00 AM to Trinidad where we would go to do the river cruise in search of the Bolivian Pink River Dolphin. The day thereafter, the group would have a 4-hour drive to Gran Mojos for the endemic and endangered Blue-throated Macaw. I would not join them to Gran Mojos as I would fly out to Barba Azul Nature Reserve for a stay of 3 days.

During the evening in Santa Cruz, it turned out that the airline had made a mistake and all had to go on the 06:00 AM **flight from Santa Cruz to Cochabamba to Trinidad**. That meant we had to get up at 04:00 AM. However, things changed that evening, and all but me managed to be on the 12:30 flight, leaving them time in the morning to go to one of the city parks in search of some monkeys. The only exception was me; I had to be on the 06:00 AM flight and would have a 5-hour wait in Cochabamba before going on the same flight as the others from Cochabamba to Trinidad.

Although it meant I had not much sleep as I had to get up at 04:00 AM, I didn't mind. It would give me **a nice 5 hours to work on my laptop in Cochabamba**. So the next morning I took the flight and worked on my laptop at the airport in Cochabamba. Around 12:00 PM I got a message from Nick and Paul stating that their flight had been cancelled altogether! What a bummer!!! They would have to change their plans and spend 2 days around Santa Cruz visiting some good places before going home to the UK. It also meant I didn't have a chance to say goodbye to them in person!! We did some texting via app and we wished each other good travels.





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For me, in the end I was very fortunate to be on the very early flight as I still managed to do the river cruise on the Rio Ibare with Miriam and Efrem from the [Chuchini Lodge](#). What a great place to visit and they welcomed me warmly. The three of us had a great time on the river and

had good views of the [Bolivian Pink River Dolphin](#). The previous year I did the same trip and it is always great to see those pink dolphins in the river.



We went all the way out to the sandbanks and had some nice birds and mammals like the [Hoatzin](#), [Black Skimmers](#), [Bolivian Red Howler monkey](#), and [Brown Three-toed sloth](#). During the boat trip, I had a nice talk with Miriam who is from Switzerland but ended up here 14 years ago. She is married to Efrem, they have two kids and are the proud owners of Chuchini

Lodge, a real wild place on the edge of the river where [Blue-and-yellow](#) and [Red-and-green Macaws](#) fly in the sky and where we saw a great [Whipsnake](#) on the property when we left on the boat. A lovely place and certainly worthwhile to come back!

After returning from the boat, the driver of [Chuchini Lodge](#), Fernando, brought me back to Trinidad, a 40-minute ride in the dark through the forest. While driving, I got a WhatsApp from Nick. I opened it and started writing a response when Fernando suddenly said with excitement in his voice 'a Gato' (meaning Cat)! I looked up immediately but it was already gone! What a miss!! I started asking what Wildcat species he had seen and, as he spoke no English, he finally mentioned [Jaguar](#). **How could I miss a [Jaguar](#) in front of the road?** I was angry at myself and it added to the misery of having missed out on a few Wildcat species the past two weeks.... It turned out later that it **probably wasn't a [Jaguar](#) but an [Ocelot](#)**...





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Whew... that's something I can live with and it made it easier to **forgive myself**.

That evening I checked in at the **Boutique Hotel del Rey in Trinidad** and had dinner with **Lyliam Gonzalez**. She guides in Trinidad, together with **Guido**, and last year **her daughter Geraldine and friend Adriana** guided us in search of the Short-eared Dog. We didn't find that one but got to our surprise the Pantanal Cat! Hopefully we will manage again this year to observe it. Since last year Lyliam has been one of my biggest fans of My Big Cat Year on social media. Lyliam, thanks again for your warm welcome to Trinidad, enormously appreciated!!! After dinner, we said goodbye and made the appointment that in three days' time, when I would have returned from Barba Azul Nature Reserve, she and Guido would pick me up at 08:00 AM from the hotel in search of the Pantanal Cat and other amazing wildlife.

So, on the 25th of August, from Trinidad I made my way to Barba Azul, a great place.



Barba Azul is a great place and is famous for its protection of the **endemic and very threatened Blue-throated Macaws**. Luckily the trend is upwards and the population has almost doubled in recent years to around 600 birds in the whole of Bolivia. I understood

that the population in Barba Azul is around 80 at the moment. **Arjan Dwarshuis** brought me in contact with **Tjalle Boorsma** (thanks Arjan!), who is the Conservation Program Director of **Asociacion Armonia (Birdlife Partner Bolivia)**. While I was in China, I had a Teams call with Tjalle and discussed my plans. From there on, one of Tjalle's people helped me further. Thanks Tjalle!



It is challenging to get to Barba Azul Nature Reserve as it can only be reached by an 8-hour drive from Trinidad or by a very small plane. The latter is what I did and it provided me with some great views over the habitat and some exciting take-offs and landings.





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The reserve has only a few cabins and is only for diehard nature lovers. I was the only eco-tourist out here but the staff **Rosella and Marbella** were taking good care of me and the food was great. But unbelievably coincidental, there were also **three Dutch students** there doing research for their master's thesis. They study in Wageningen at the same university where I completed my Master's, back in 1991. On the first night, I had a nice chat with **Fannie, Jasper, and Niels**; great to speak some Dutch again!



The first afternoon I went into the forest in front of the lodge. It is interesting to get there because you have to pass open water with a boat which you move yourself through a line; it is a bit of a ferry and takes you 100 meters over open water. In the forest, I went to the roosting spot for the **Blue-throated Macaws** and I had them quite easily; what a stunning bird!! Mammals were abundant like

the **Greater Capybaras** and the **Marsh Deer**. In the evening I did a walk with a thermal and got many **Collared Peccaries** and a **Northern Black-eared Opossum** which I could approach closely. Also, I am **pretty sure I got a Maned Wolf in my thermal**. It was at a forest edge and it got away before I could have a 100% identification, what a pity!

Next morning, I was up at 04:30 to pass the water again and to go on my own again into the dark forest with thermal and spotlight. I had already spotted some **Marsh Deer and Capybaras** when traversing the waterways before entering the forest. Within 20 minutes a **Southern Tamandua** (a kind of small anteater) appeared in my thermal! A great start!

I continued and continuously used my thermal, walking in the dark with a decent moon so no extra light was needed. Suddenly I noticed a mammal on the left side of the path; in my thermal, it was lying down. The shape and its ears put me immediately on alert: it is a cat! It was about 40 meters from me, in the bush. **After two minutes, I used my flashlight and there it was, a Puma! My first one and in terms of the Wildcat species, nr 21 for the year and 25 in life.**

I made a brief clip recording myself just after I saw the Puma. For me a very emotional moment to be there on my own in complete darkness at 5 AM and finding a Puma!





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As there is no hunting on the property, the cat was relaxed, stood up, lay down and I could observe it for another 10 minutes or so, allowing me to take some images (which is difficult if you have to manage both your camera and the flashlight). I tried to get a little bit closer but as expected, the Puma made its move and disappeared into the thicket.

Barba Azul is a great place for birding and the first two days brought me already close to 100 birds and some good mammals as well, like the **Tamandua, Black-and-Gold Howler Monkey, Brown Capuchin Monkey, Northern Black-eared Opossum, and South American Coatis**.

The next two days I basically had the following rhythm and schedule:

- Between 04:30 and 05:00 AM I was out walking with a thermal and flashlight and around 09:00 I would return to my cabin and have a shower.
- Around 09:30 AM Marbella had prepared a great breakfast and I stayed there until 12:00 doing a lot of work on my laptop. I then tried to take an hour of rest or so in my cabin.
- At 14:00 again a great and healthy lunch in the same area and I would stay there until 16:00 working on my laptop.
- From 16:30 until 18:30 I would do some walking again, especially looking for the Jaguarundi on the airstrip.
- At 19:00 I was in the dining area again with my laptop and at 20:00 I had dinner. I then went out with my thermal and flashlight again from 21:00 to around 22:30.

The scheme provided me with good opportunities to see the reserve in daytime, at dusk, at night, and very early in the morning. Over the three days, I got some great mammals like **Puma, Maned Wolf (jumped off the path and had a brief glimpse), Lowland Paca, Southern Tamandua (2x), Northern Black-eared Opossum, Collared Peccary (many), Nine-banded Armadillo, Brown Agouti, Marsh Deer, Pampas Deer, Common Brocket Deer, South American Coati, Black-and-gold Howler Monkey, and Brown Capuchin Monkey**. Besides the Puma, especially the Maned Wolf, Tamandua, and the Paca were some great mammals I always loved to see, so I'm very pleased I managed.





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Birdlife was excellent with some special ones like **Ash-throated Crane, Sharp-tailed Tyrant, White-rumped Monjita, White-rumped Tanager, Orange-backed Troupial, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Blue-throated Macaw, Sunbittern, Razor-billed Curassow, and Yellow-collared Macaw.**

Before leaving I informed Tjalle about my sightings and he was very pleased to hear it had been such a success. I also informed him that on behalf of My Big Cat Year we made a donation towards Armonia Bolivia, which he was very thankful for!

On the 28th I said goodbye to Rosella and Marbella who had taken great care of me. At 13:00 PM I went on the bike with Julian who brought me and my luggage to the airstrip where Captain Nicolas Suarez had already landed his plane. One hour later **I was back in Trinidad** and I was pleased to be back in Hotel Boutique del Rey, an authentic Bolivian hotel with a good shower and a good bed. A good rest and the following morning I would go out with Lylia and her guides and helpers **in search of the Pantanal Cat.**



At 08:00 AM Lylia picked me up together with her **helper Joaquim**, who was in the back of the truck. We went to the university complex where we saw, to our big surprise last year, the Pantanal Cat, a subspecies of the Pampas Cat (see the website of the IUCN). Last year it was quite a thrilling adventure and it can be read on the blog on the website. Hopefully we would manage this year again to get

it. The university complex is basically a test farm for students. The farm is in a nature area and is surrounded by some good habitat. Also, the road out of Trinidad towards the area is interesting and has good habitat for all kinds of wildlife.





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As Lylam's niece has a farm about a km from the complex in an area with some good forest (where we saw last year **Crab-eating Raccoons**, **Opossums**, **Collared Peccary**, and **several monkey species**, we went there to pick up **two of her workers, Alfredo and Alfredo**, who would lead me through the forest. On the road approaching the farm we suddenly noticed a



2 1/2 meter long snake on the road, both Lylam and myself said '**Anaconda!!**'. It was 30 meters in front of our car. I jumped out of the car and quickly moved towards the snake allowing me some images. The snake moved towards the grass and slipped

away. As it was an **Anaconda**, I thought about taking its tail and moving it towards the road. However, as I was not 100% sure about the type of snake, I didn't and the snake moved away, even before Lylam and Joaquim could have a good view of it.

Afterwards I texted the image to Nick who informed me it was a **False Water Cobra**, i.e. **not an Anaconda!!!** In the end a wise decision for me to not touch the snake and leave it alone ... (as you generally should do with all wildlife!).



That morning, we got some good species like **White-eared Titi**, **Black-and-gold Howler Monkey**, **Capuchin Monkey**, and some birds like **Rufous-tailed Jacamar** and **Black-crowned Trogon**. At around 11:00 we left, we dropped off Joaquim and went for a nice lunch at the lake. It was one of my few 'meat' days where I allowed

myself some meat, so I had a good steak!!! Rest of the day, I rested and worked in my room at the hotel.





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At 20:00 PM they picked me up again and we went into the same area. On the long way leading to the complex, we got a cat next to the road... I was excited as this may be the Pantanal Cat!! I got some footage and pictures but after having a good look at them, it



was not a Pantanal cat but a Domestic Cat which may have been had some hybrid elements in it. Especially the markings on its face and the white chin looked had something of a Pantanal Cat. However, its ears, its legs, the markings on its body and its colour did not resemble a Pantanal Cat. An exciting start but not yet what we wanted. We continued into the forest and picked up

Alfredo and Alfredo again. I had two exciting night walks; during one of them we spotted the Long-tailed Porcupine and a Sloth. Nice. At around 23:30 we went back to town and on our way we had another exciting moment with a small cat. Unfortunately, we never came close enough to identify it. At 01:00 AM I was in my hotel and had a good rest.

Following morning at 08:00 AM, Lyliam was there again, cheerful as ever. During the drives I asked about her life and she told me a lot. What a story!! And what a strong almost 70-year-old woman! I urged her to write a book about her life as it is a fascinating story. Lyliam, you really should write it!!

The morning we had a short drive for three hours in another direction and basically did some relaxed birding. I was back early at the hotel, skipped lunch, and got a lot of work done! At 19:00 PM Lyliam picked me up again and we went to the university area again. Just before entering the complex, we had another small cat! But again, we did not manage to identify it. Every time I spotted the cat but it is difficult to manoeuvre with both the spotlight and the binoculars at the same time. How unfortunate. It slipped away again, not allowing any



pictures. A disappointment for us all but we continued and picked up Alfredo and Alfredo again. That night we did not have new species other than a Common Potoo. At around 23:00 PM we dropped off the Alfredos. We did some searching at the long main road where we had found the cats before but no surprises this time. At around 00:30 we called it a day, drove back to town where I thanked Lyliam warmly for her support

and got a nice rest in the hotel.





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Next day the driver/guide whom I met earlier picked me up at 13:30 and dropped me off at the airport where I took the 14:50 flight to **Cochabamba**, where I switched to another plane to **Santa Cruz**. We had an hour delay in Cochabamba and at around 18:00 PM I arrived at Santa Cruz. The luggage had unfortunately and surprisingly not been put on the plane to Santa Cruz. Very nicely, they would bring it later and delivered it around 23:00 PM at the **Hampton Hotel in Santa Cruz**. Nice to be back again in the hotel. I had a quick and unhealthy meal (nachos and chips) at the Aviator, the place next door.

Next day, Nick and a guide picked me up at 13:30 to go to **Buena Vista in Amboro for the Margay**, one of the most difficult Wildcat species in the world to try to observe. Nick would only stay for one night but his guide Fernando would assist me on the second day.



We arrived at Bosque del Jose, very close to Amboro NP, late in the afternoon. It is an amazing place and Jose, who is originally from Germany and lives already 40 years in Bolivia, has had this place already for 34 years. It is an area of over 50 hectares of secondary forest. He lives there on his own, his 19 year old son lives in Buena Vista, and has been working all his life to protect this nice piece of forest with some good wildlife. He has camera traps which regularly show

Margays and occasionally a Puma. The Margay is the reason we were there.



That evening we, Nick, Fernando, Jose and myself went out at 21:30 PM with the thermals. We



walked for close to 3 1/2 hours and got **Azara's Night Monkey**, **Brown Capuchin Monkey** and two new Opossum species for me, the **Bare-tailed Woolly Opossum** and the **Common Fat-tailed Opossum**.





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Next morning, we had a good breakfast and I had the interview with Nick. Nick had to leave to Santa Cruz as a tour with some new guests would start today. We said goodbye and I thanked Nick again warmly for his great support throughout the year. During the day I got some **nice Bolivian Red Howler monkeys** and in the night a good **Long-tailed Porcupine**.

On the 5th of September I will fly out to **Medellin in Colombia** for a brief visit to **Mirador el Roble**. Famous for the **Northern Oncilla** which visits the place on a regular basis. Fingers crossed!

Many thanks again to [Nick's Adventures Bolivia](#), Nick Nicholas McPhee, Mauricio Peñaranda del Carpio, Jose, Caesar, [Wise Birding](#), Chris Townend and my fellow travellers Barry Stewart, Sandra Stewart, Grant Edmondson, Paul French, Ray Klarik and Fiona Fyfe for the first 12 days in Kaa Iya NP and Jaguarland. It was a great trip, with some great sightings in good habitats, well organized, great guides, drivers and cooks. Especially thanks to Nicholas McPhee who has been a big support to me throughout the whole year!!!

Also thanks to Miriam and Efrem for a very nice afternoon on the river safari in Trinidad at the [Chuchini Lodge](#), to Tjalle Boorsma and the great staff at Barba Azul and to Lylam Gonzalez for the nice few days in Trinidad!

The last weeks have been also amazing for me with regard to the generation of funding for the conservation projects. The **initiative by my Hockey team was truly heartwarming**. Equally so, the initiative that **Mark de Lange** and **Mark Bressers** are taking to support the conservation projects of My Big Cat Year is amazing. **Many, many deep thanks to Mark and Mark!!!**

The Big Cat Year is not just about spotting wild cats. It is also about habitat and wildlife conservation. The aim is to support a project/organization in every country visited. With regard to Bolivia, we have made a donation towards both [Asociacion Armonia \(Birdlife Partner Bolivia\)](#) and to Bosque del Jose. (which does not have a website, an indication of the charm of the place!)

Would you like to contribute to supporting these important projects and/or organizations in the world with regard to conservation and protection of nature and wildlife, please have a look at the [funding page](#). All help is appreciated! Big and small, it all counts. [You can already help by buying the projects a coffee](#).





My Big Cat Year – Visit to Bolivia for the South American Wildcat species – 14/08/26 to 04/09/26

Species	Seen 2026	Kaa Iya - 3 full days - 15/16/17/18/19 aug	Jaguarland - 2 full days - 20/21/22/23 aug	Trinidad - Cuchini Lodge - 1 full day - 24 aug	Barba Azul - 3 full days - 25/26/27/28/29 aug	Trinidad - 2 full days - 30/31 Aug	Santa Cruz - Bosque del Jose - 2 full days - 1/2 sept
9-banded armadillo	1				3 x		
Southern 3-banded armadillo	1	1 x					
Brown-throated 3-toed Sloth	1		2 x	1 x		1 x	
Southern Tamandua	1				2 x		
Black-tailed Marmoset	1	2 x					
Brown Capuchin	1				1 x	1 x	6 x
Azara's capuchin	1		2 x				
Azara's Night Monkey	1		3 x			4 x	3 x
Pale Titi	1	2 x					
White-eared Titi	1					2 x	
Black-and-gold Howler	1				10 x	2 x	
Bolivian Red Howler	1		5 x	3 x			1 x
Long-tailed Porcupine	1					1 x	1 x
Brazilian Guinea Pig (Cavi)	1		2 x				
Azara's agouti	1		6 x				
Lowland Paca	1				1 x		
Capybara	1		> 20x	2 x	20 x	6 x	
Common Tapeti	1	5 x					
Boto	1			4 x			
Ocelot	1	3 x	1 x (3 x) 2 x	(1 x)			
Puma	1		3 x		1 x		
Jaguar	1		2 x 3 x				
Pampas Fox	1	1 x					
Crab-eating Fox	1	14 x	> 20 x	1 x			
Crab-eating Raccoon	1		1 x				
South American Coati	1		2 x		10 x		
Greater Grison	1		1 x				
Lowland Tapir	1		2 x				
Collared Peccary	1	1 x	1 x		8 x		
Marsh Deer	1		8 x		10 x		
Common Brown Brocket	1	3 x	2 x		4 x		
Pampas Deer	1				4 x		
Common Fat-tailed Opossum	1						4 x
Bare-tailed Woolly Opossum	1						1 x
Northern Black Eared Opossum	1				3 x		
Maned Wolf	1				1 x		

