

Brazilian Bonanza

Alexander Meyer • Alexander.f.meyer@gmail.com



Pre-trip:

Brazil has long held a special place in my heart. It was here, at Iguazu Falls, that I proposed to my wife, Ann at sunset. A place more beautiful than I could've ever imagined.

But now, in 2021, it seemed off-limits due to the country's dizzying Covid statistics. Thankfully I was vaccinated and planning to avoid time in urban centers, so I felt comfortable returning. I asked Jon Hall who he'd recommend in Brazil and there was one name he insisted on: Regina Ribeiro.

Regina and I spent weeks in email correspondence. I had an extensive wish list that would take massive planning and country-traversing to accomplish. Then, the morning of my birthday I was hit with dreadful news: most of the places we had talked about were closed due to Covid. But with a bit of luck, perseverance, and Regina's strong connections, one by one they fell back into place. Regina worked collectively with Boute Expeditions Tours, a company I can't rave about enough. All of the guides and lodging they provided were top notch, and they went above and beyond researching my wish-list.

Following a successful week with Jon Hall ([Ecuador-2021](#)) I was Covid tested and ready for Brazil. It was midnight when I arrived at the Quito airport, seemingly oodles of time before my 4am, June 9th flight. The flight email loaded on my phone and my heart sank. JULY 9th!? Oh my God. I had hastily moved my flight days earlier to make time for Shrew Opossum hunting and mistook JUL 9th for JUN 9th. That one small letter meant a world of trouble. My reservation was so far into the future it didn't even show in their system, meanwhile, tonight's flight was overbooked to boot. I frantically searched Kayak for alternatives until a reasonable option popped up, only to have the price increase threefold at check out. Repeated attempts eventually yielded an affordable ticket, albeit one that stopped in Bogota and Panama City before finally landing in Rio de Janeiro.

25 hours later, I touched down in Brazil. Although precious few hours remained for sleep, I was ecstatic to be there on time for my big tour.

Itinerary & Key Targets: (June 10th – July 2nd, 2021)

Day 1: Rio- Visit CPRJ. Fly from Rio to Vitoria. Drive to Alfonso Claudio.

Day 2: Alfonso Claudio- Sítio Gute Stelle. **(Maned Sloth, Masked Titi)**

Day 3: Alfonso Claudio- Sítio Gute Stelle. Drive to Caratinga.

Day 4: Caratinga- FMA Private Reserve. **(Northern Muriqui, Buffy-headed Marmoset, Black Capuchin)**

Day 5: Caratinga- FMA Private Reserve. Drive to Caraca.

Day 6: Caraca- Santuário do Caraca. **(Maned Wolf, Brazilian Squirrel)**

Day 7: Caraca. Drive to Belo Horizonte. Fly to Ilhéus.

Day 8: Ilheús- Una Ecopark. **(Coastal Black-handed Titi, Golden-headed Lion Tamarin, Yellow-Breasted Capuchin, Wied's Marmoset, Bahia & Thin-spined Porcupine)**

Day 9: Ilheús- Una Ecopark. Fly to Cuiaba (via São Paulo).

Day 10: Pantanal- Cuiaba. Drive to Pouso Alegre Lodge. **(Brazilian Tapir, Marsh Deer, Red & Gray Brocket, Crab-eating Fox, Fringe-lipped Bat)**

Day 11: Pantanal- Pouso Alegre Lodge. Drive to Porto Jofre.

Day 12: Pantanal- Porto Jofre- all day on boat. **(Jaguar, Ocelot, Giant & Neotropical River Otter)**

Day 13: Pantanal- Porto Jofre- morning on boat. Drive to Piuval Lodge.

Day 14: Pantanal- Piuval Lodge. **(Giant Anteater, Tapeti, Southern Tamandua, Black-tailed Marmoset, Black-and-gold Howler, Azara's Capuchin)**

Day 15: Pantanal- Piuval Lodge. Drive to Cuiaba. Fly to São Paulo.

Day 16: Superagüi- São Paulo. Drive to Cananeia. Boat to Superagüi.

Day 17: Superagüi- **(Superagüi Tamarin, Guiana Dolphin)**

Day 18: Superagüi-

Day 19: Superagüi- Boat to Cananeia. Drive to São Paulo. Fly to Porto Alegre.

Day 20: Porto Alegre- Banhado dos Pachecos Wildlife Refuge. **(Lami Tuco-tuco)**

Day 21: Porto Alegre- Fly to Rio. Visit CPRJ. COVID PCR Test (Rio Airport). Fly to São Paulo.

Day 22: São Paulo- Visit Sorocaba Zoo.

Day 23: São Paulo- Visit NUPECCE. Fly to New York.

Alfonso Claudio:

Fred Tavares awaited my arrival. He had a punk rock vibe and oozed fun. Within the first few minutes we knew we had a ton in common and chatting music, movies and of course animals made long rides a breeze. Hilariously, Brazilian President Bolsonaro (aka Tropical Trump) landed in Vitoria just after me, generating gridlock traffic that we narrowly avoided. A four hour's drive brought us to Pousada Cantinho dos Três Pontões. This lodge was modest but lovely. Its jovial host, Itamar, was constantly cracking jokes. He doubled as our local guide and proved extremely useful in nailing some prize targets.

Our first mammal came in the most unexpected of places: a spare oven! An opportunistic **Big-eared Opossum** had taken up residence in this seldom used appliance. We carefully lifted the burner out of place to view the marsupial. After staring at us for a few seconds, it vigorously scampered up the pipe that led outside. Itamar promised to hold off any evictions until after my visit- much appreciated.



Big-eared Opossum



Seba's Short-tailed Bats



Silky Short-tailed Bat



Pallas's Long-tongued Bats (nursing)



Nights were spent ambling around the lodge's property but intermittent rain made for dangerously slippery pathways. Between both nights we were able to thermal **Lowland Paca**, **Nine-banded Armadillo** as well as another **Big-eared Opossum**.

By day we staked out a feeder frequented by **Masked Titi** at the birder's paradise, Sítio Gute Stelle. I had a sordid history with the species. While in Florida in 2020, I got word that Giraffe Ranch near Orlando randomly kept them. During an attempt to coordinate a

visit, the owner rudely rejected my request with boundless attitude. I pleaded, saying these were probably the only ones outside of Brazil, to which she said, "I guess you'll have to go to Brazil then!" Well, mean lady, here I am! But the Titis wouldn't come easily.

The family that owns the site couldn't have been more helpful. The wife watched the Titi feeder, while the husband brought us to a cave home to **Seba's Short-tailed**, **Silky Short-tailed** and **Pallas's Long-tongued Bats** nursing young. With no sign of Titis, and only distant roars of **Northern Brown Howlers**, we pivoted and pursued another target.

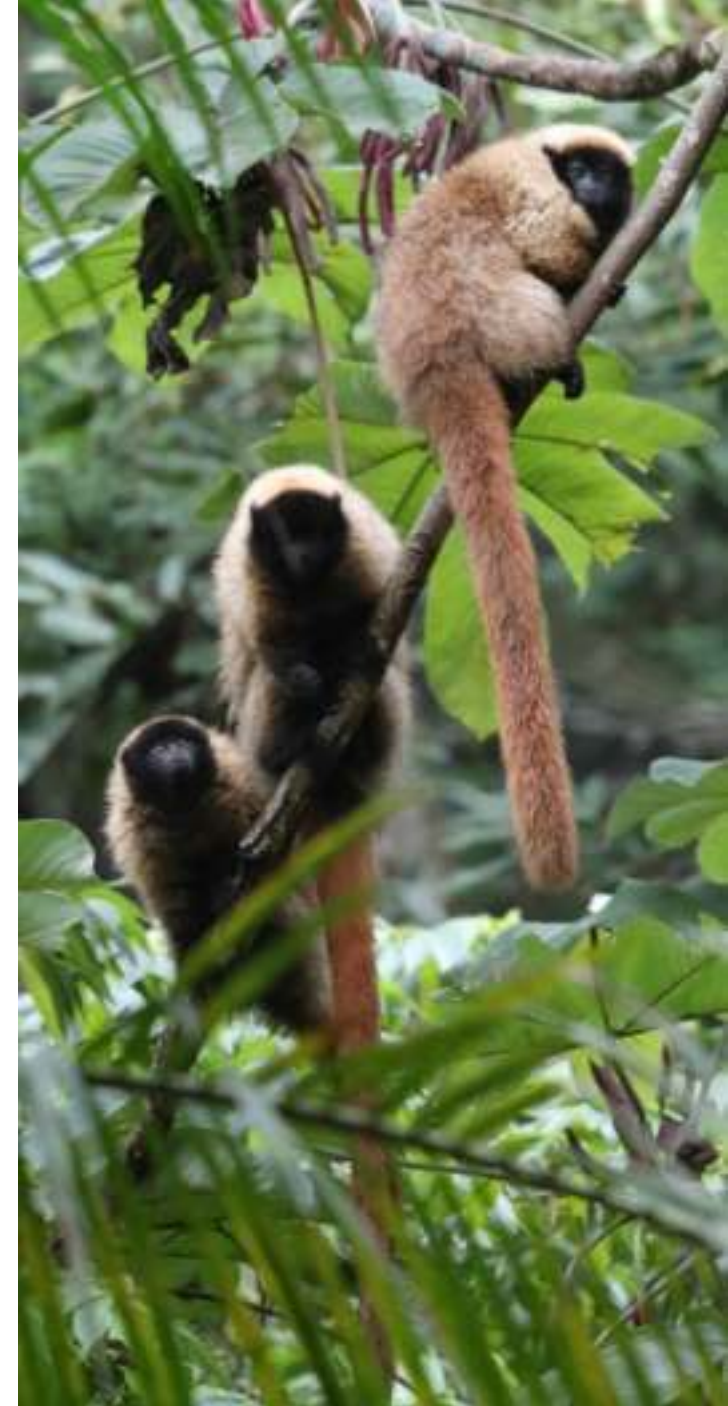


Pallas's Long-tongued Bat (young)

Itamar had put the word out there would be a cash reward for anyone who found a **Maned Sloth**. Sure enough, we got a bite. His friend Rodrigo's daughter spotted the "fugitive" high in a cecropia tree on a property he was working on. As expected, the Sloth hadn't gone far by the time we arrived. A sleeping ball of fur steadily turned into quite the slow show, as it began feeding and climbing. Rodrigo's entire family watched with delight. They had never stopped to appreciate sloth behavior before.



Masked Titi



In our absence the **Masked Titis** of course visited Sítio Gute Stelle. We raced back only to find an empty feeder. Dejected, we scanned nearby trees until finally locating the small group of four individuals sleeping. Elation! And we all shared a laugh about my Giraffe Ranch story. The following day provided pristine views of this handsome primate in action despite consistent rain.

One final adventure with Itamar and Rodrigo brought us to the latter's abandoned childhood home via exceedingly rough and muddy roads. Once inside, a long-forgotten child's doll lay broken on the floor like something of nightmares. Rodrigo had noticed bats here on a recent visit, which we found to be likely **Seba's Short-tailed**. Five more hours of driving and we'd arrive at our next lodge: Fazenda Bom Jardim.



Caratinga:

Feliciano Miguel Abdala Private Natural Heritage Reserve was purchased by Feliciano in 1944 under the condition the forests within would be preserved in perpetuity. The reserve is home to the largest concentration of critically endangered **Northern Muriqui** in the world. Unfortunately, because of Covid, they'd temporarily closed their door to visitors.

Fortunately, the owner knew Fred and graciously permitted our visit on the condition that I was vaccinated and would be the only guest. We shared meals and conversation with Eduardo and Maria, who were friends of the owner and showed a genuine interest in our company.



Seba's Short-tailed Bats

Come morning, with the help of a local guide named Roberto, we found the more difficult target of **Buffy-headed Marmosets** first by searching along one of the main roads. Two vociferous groups faced off on either side of the road, an impressive 13 animals in total. Now our focus shifted to Muriquis and we were in luck: there was a group of researchers here tracking and studying the woolly primate. The sporadic thermaling of abandoned buildings on the way turned up more **Seba's Short-tailed Bats**.



Buffy-headed Marmoset

Northern Muriqui



By midday we rendezvoused with Muriqui trackers on the scent. A troop of **Northern Muriqui** was crossing the trees above a road. Leaves rained down like confetti as we watched their transit from below. Their pale cream fur and pink faces popped against a lush green backdrop. They stopped to rest and feed, unbothered by our presence. As Fred would say with the most enthusiastic of accents, "FANTASTIC!"



Armed with a thermal scope, a night walk along the Sapucaia Road provided multiples views of a *Tawny-browed Owl* and the exciting find of a **Paraguayan Hairy Dwarf Porcupine**.

Black Capuchins and **Northern Brown Howlers** proved elusive on our first day, with only auditory proof of the latter. Primate populations, especially the Howlers, were decimated by a Yellow Fever epidemic a few years ago but they were starting to bounce back. We managed both species the following day with a mother and young Howler showing up at zero hour.



Paraguayan Hairy Dwarf Porcupine

Caraca:

A six-hour journey by car brought us to Pousada Capão da Coruja. This is the perfect lodge for night walks, as they have several manageable trails in close proximity. After dinner the first night, we took a trail by the lake and thermaled multiple tree-bound rodents, possible **Atlantic Forest Arboreal Rice Rats**.

The following day proved to be quite the emotional roller-coaster. Santuário do Caraca was world renowned as a monastery where priests feed wild **Maned Wolves** each night after mass. The problem was, because of Covid, they were only allowing night guests on the weekends and today was Tuesday. Regina had pleaded with them, but to no avail. We figured we'd try our luck in person.

We arrived early morning and located some **Brazilian Squirrels** along the Cascatona Trail within the first hour. Strolling the greenhouse area, we flushed a **Gray Brocket**. We tried the Tanque Grande Trail twice in hopes of **Black-fronted Titis** but their numbers remained dire post-yellow fever. Instead, we saw more **Black Capuchins** and in the late afternoon thermaled a **Little Yellow-shouldered Bat** hanging from a branch at eye level.

Still, Maned Wolf was the prime objective. Unfortunately, Fred's priest contact had fallen ill and returned home. The church's new corporate manager was our only hope. On my behalf, Fred implored we be allowed to stay past dark, but the callous manager wouldn't budge. He reiterated- no guests were allowed on weekdays. Dejected, Fred suggested we spent our final hour around the Piscina area, where he'd previously seen wolves.



Atlantic Forest Arboreal Rice Rat



Little Yellow-shouldered Bat



Black Capuchin



Brazilian Squirrel

Alas, we emerged wolf-less and were about to leave when a curious thing happened. A convoy of vehicles with travel expedition stickers passed by, heading TOWARDS the church. Confused and upset, Fred spun us around and joined the convoy. As the parking lot came into view, we were met by the employee shuttle bus. Primed to leave for the night, they were curious of our presence. Clever and quick on his feet, Fred was ready with an explanation. “Ah, wouldn’t you know it, I lost my wallet,” he rused as he patted empty pockets. “Do you mind if I look around?” With a roll of eyes, they granted access, all the while Fred’s wallet had been discreetly shoved into the car’s glove box. We had just bought ourselves some time.

As it turned out, the corporate manager had lied and over 30 guests were welcomed on this weekday night. It’s unclear why we were shunned from this unique offer, but here we were anyways and Fred was having fun with it. In-between wallet hunting, he happily obliged elderly women from the tour group by carrying their luggage. Meanwhile employees with flashlights had started to comb the countryside, joining Fred in this farce. All the while he dodged security guards as if from a Scooby Doo chase scene.

I waited atop the stone stairs where the feedings occur, praying that wolves may show up early. Yet, the excessive amount of human activity in the parking lot nearby left little hope. One of the guards approached me, clearly frustrated and asking about Fred in Portuguese. I simply shrugged and said, “sorry, Inglês?”



Eventually, he managed to find Fred on his own. Fred continued trying to play dumb but the guard wasn't having it. He practically dragged Fred by the ear back to me. The jig was up and we had to leave NOW! We had successfully overstayed our welcome by two hours, but still no meat and no wolves. I knew the guard was following his deceitful manager's orders, but I dramatically mimed to him my heart was breaking.

Fred reassured me we had a chance on our way out, but the front gate would be expecting us. We drove a constant, deliberate pace, eyes peeled to the sides of the road. I tried to remain optimistic, but the exit was looming. "THERE!" Fred screamed incredulously, slapping my back in excitement. Not twenty feet away, smack in the middle of a dirt path stood a gorgeous, long-legged **Maned Wolf**. Even my camera got wrapped up in the excitement and the flash malfunctioned. Thankfully it settled down and allowed for some good shots. I couldn't believe it, and with five minutes to spare! Good thing Fred helped those ladies with their bags!





Gray Slender Opossum



Bare-tailed Woolly Opossum

We couldn't stop talking about the wolf over dinner. What a great way to end our final day together. At 10PM we attempted one more night walk around the lodge. First, we returned to the lake trail from the night before. A mouse-like shape glowed in my thermal at eye level but was strangely still. We approached ever so slowly, and it didn't move a muscle. Upon closer inspection it was a **Gray Slender Opossum**! A lifer for us both and my favorite animal of the trip. We maneuvered around the branches for ten minutes without the animal budging. We got so close that I needed to use my iPhone camera. Next, we doubled back past the lodge and explored a trail on the opposite end of the property. They were overrun with Opossums here, as three more popped up on thermal. First a **Bare-tailed Woolly Opossum**, followed by two solitary **Big-eared Opossums**. Three types of marsupials within the same hour, I couldn't believe it!

An especially early drive the next morning guaranteed I'd make my next flight: Ilhéus out of Belo Horizonte.

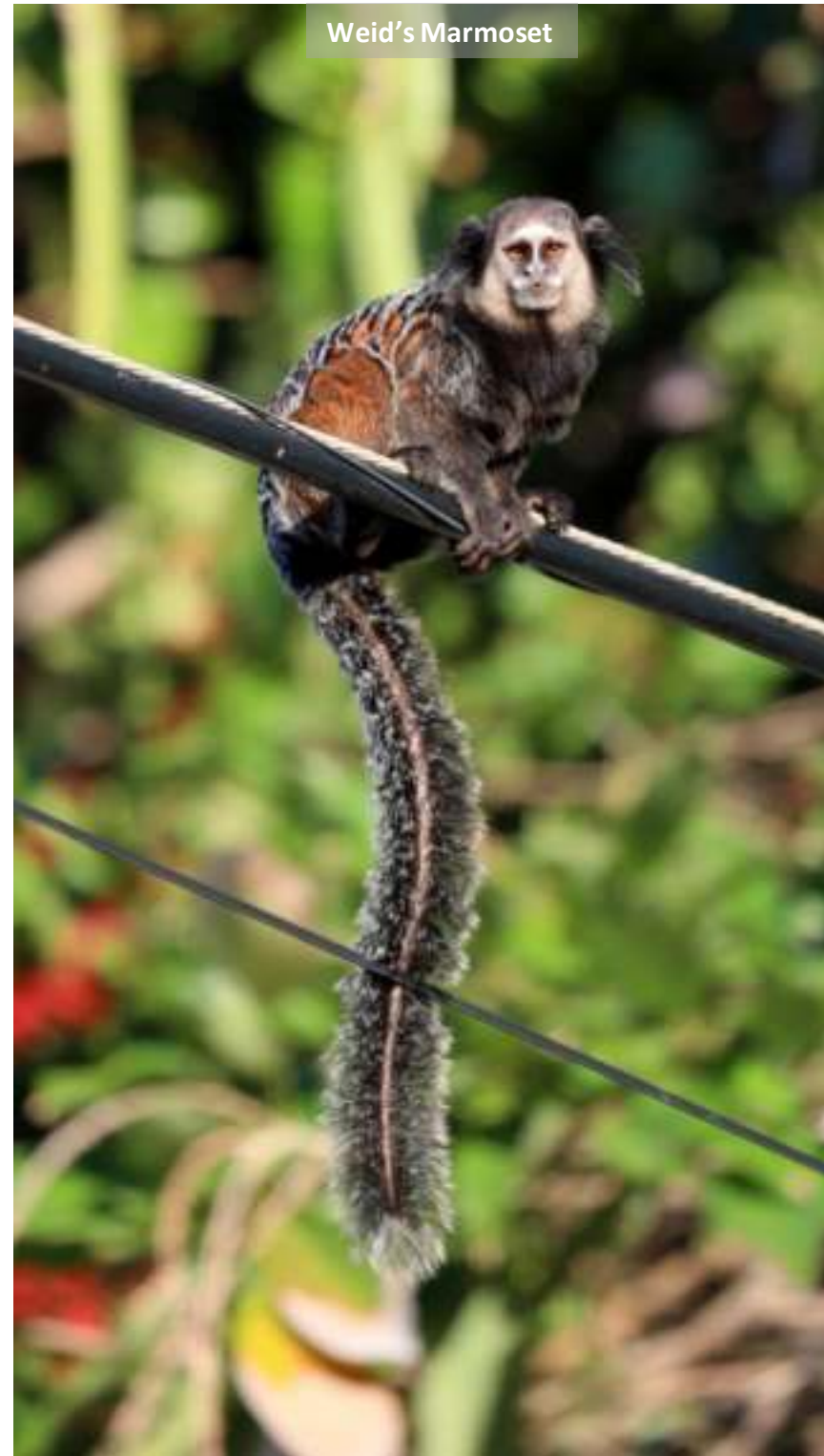


Ilhéus:

My next guide, Leo Patrial, lived in the Ilhéus area and was very well versed in the region's birds and mammals. He intercepted me at the airport and we immediately got to work. Following the footsteps of Jon Hall, we inquired about **Guiana Dolphins** at the Porto de Ilhéus. As Jon noted, the best place to see the dolphins is at the end of the private pier. Leo sliced through red tape with samurai precision and within the hour we were standing on the rocks at the end of the pier watching Dolphins play in the surf below. Randomly, our dock-employee/chaperone also studied bats on the side and helped ID some species I had seen so far. We kept this maritime detour brief, knowing we'd want to dedicate the afternoon to Una Ecopark.

The Ecopark is an hour's drive from Ilhéus, but halfway there Leo pulled to the side of the road. With the windows down, he had heard high-pitched chirping coming from across the highway. Sure enough, a small group of **Weid's Marmoset** was making their way along the suburban power lines and into the trees.

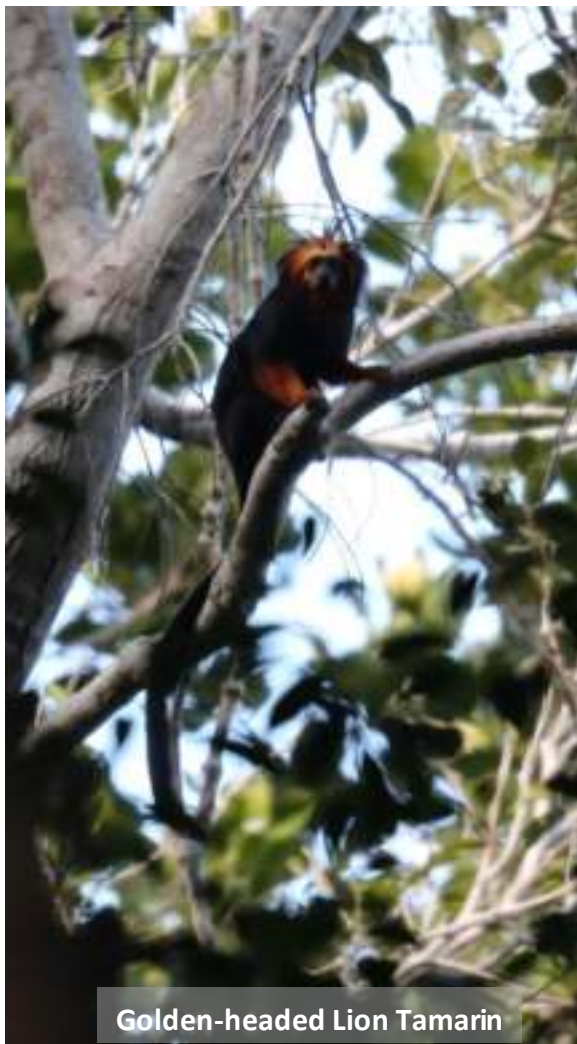
Guiana Dolphin (eating an eel)



Weid's Marmoset







We stayed at Pousada Ilha do Desejo, a lovely beach-side lodge that guests access by ferrying across a mangrove river on a wooden platform. Our focal point for the next few days was 15 km down Estrada Una-Ilheus, the main road that leads to the Ecopark. Leo knew **Coastal Black-handed Titis** can be heard and seen reliably here. We tried our luck four separate times in the late afternoons and early mornings, spending several hours each day. Armed with Titi vocalizations, we gradually worked our way up from receiving distant calls, to eventually tracking them down along the Aerial Trail the second morning. Here we caught a brief glimpse of a single animal high in the trees until it mysteriously disappeared, proving just how shy and secretive these animals can be.

While listening for Titis, we came across a lively group of **Golden-headed Lion Tamarins**. Their flashy black and gold fur appeared unnatural against the forest setting. They played hide and squeak while hanging off the sides of tree trunks. On the second morning we thermaled a family of **Weid's Marmosets** beginning to stir in high branches along the main road. Our fourth and final primate was a fleeting view of a **Golden-breasted Capuchin** climbing in a tree behind the Ecopark's bathroom.

Many of the Ecopark's buildings were abandoned to the point of being overgrown - a dream scenario for bats in the area. The aforementioned bathroom was overflowing with them at every corner. The majority were likely **Seba's Short-tailed Bats**, with a smattering of **Pallas's Long-tongued Bats**. Further along we found a few **Greater Sac-winged Bats** in the roof of the now defunct Environmental Education Center, as well as in the trees above. Each afternoon, a short trail off Ecopark Road yielded different bats roosting on a dirt embankment at eye level: first **Little Big-eared Bats**, and then more Pallas's Long-tongued Bats.

Golden-headed Lion Tamarin

Greater Sac-winged Bat



Seba's Short-tailed & Pallas's Long-tongued Bats



Little Big-eared Bat



Pallas's Long-tongued Bats





Six-banded Armadillo

At night we set our sights on two endemics: the **Bahia** and **Bristle-spined Porcupines**. Due to exhaustion, we resorted to driving the first night, making thermaling more difficult. Nevertheless, we enjoyed a **Six-banded Armadillo** bounding along the road. I was determined to devote more time on foot for our second and final night. We trekked along the Ecopark Road towards Vila Brasil, thermaling the occasional sleeping bird, but no mammals. The lodge's restaurant was closing soon and we contemplated turning around, but something inside urged me to push on. Moments later, we had a promising heat signature: high in a tree and an exact size match. Sadly, this tree was mostly inaccessible and hundreds of feet away and in a valley below a cliff. We had to at least get to the edge of that cliff. We scrambled over vines and a downed tree whose dried roots provided haphazard footing. I was now at record shot distance: a **Bahia Porcupine**! It wasn't too thrilled with our noisy arrival, so it



Bahia Porcupine

lay in wait, entombed by thick branches. Dinner be damned, I was going to get a better view! So, we stood on the unstable collection of roots impersonating the “ground,” quietly waiting in total darkness, relying on the thermal scope to dictate our next move. But we weren’t alone. Tons of ants called these roots home and had begun the agonizing process of biting their way up my legs. I thought being bit on the thigh was painful, until the next bite had me questioning my fertility... I endured this torture for over an hour praying for this sadist porcupine to budge. After 75 minutes, the pain paid off and the animal finally moseyed on down to an open branch. Relief at last! I was amassing battle scars today, having been stung in the face by bees earlier that morning.

Upon our return, the restaurant graciously threw together whatever they could to quell our hunger. Two flights and a São Paulo layover later I’d be exploring the Pantanal.

Northern Pantanal:

I had long dreamed of visiting the Pantanal. With Tigers as my first wild big cat, I hoped for **Jaguars** to be the next. Yet, when I visited Brazil for the first time in 2013, I ultimately chose Iguazu. Now it was the Pantanal’s turn. I had high hopes, with six days dedicated to the world’s largest tropical wetland, and it didn’t disappoint. We chose to focus in the North where Jaguars are more frequently encountered. In addition to Covid, the Pantanal was also ravaged by widespread fires in 2020. A sobering tale, yet uplifting to see it bounce back so vigorously a year later.

My next guide, Juan da Cruz, picked me up at Hotel Taina near Cuiaba airport. He was a kind soul who was even more excited find animals than I was. And he knew just where to look. By complete chance he was the same Pantanal guide Tomer Ben-Yehuda used 12 years earlier. Small world!



Pouso Alegre

We got off to a rocky start- pun intended. A pebble chipped the windshield of Juan's new car 20 minutes into its maiden voyage. With our view mostly unimpaired, we stopped in Cangas for the possibility of **Pampas Deer** but settled instead for the first of many **Capybara**. After passing miles of wall-to-wall caimans, we approached Pouso Alegre Lodge. Next to the entry road stood a female **Marsh Deer**, whose black legs and reddish body were oddly reminiscent of Caraca's Maned Wolf. She was followed soon thereafter by a female **Gray Brocket**. Once at the lodge, **Azara's Capuchin** and **South American Coati** were readily visible as we ate a buffet lunch featuring Pacu fish, a Piranha relative.

Nearby, an abandoned stable was brimming with roosting bats. Large numbers of **Pallas's Long-nosed Bats** and **Seba's Short-tailed Bats** were accompanied by a sizable group of **Fringe-lipped Bats** which eerily crawled between rooms, where the wall met the ceiling. A solitary, stoic **Wagner's Bonneted Bat** stood out along the far wall as a distinctive fourth species in this batty barn.



Marsh Deer



Gray Brocket

Azaras's Capuchin



South American Coati



Fringe-lipped Bat



Wagner's Bonneted Bat



Fringe-lipped Bat



Seba's Short-tailed Bat

We traveled to nearby Pousada Rio Clarinho, which featured its own bat shack with more **Pallas's**. The resident **Crab-eating Foxes** here are extremely habituated and allowed for an up-close and personal experience. At sunset a **Marsh Deer** buck proudly strutted across the property. We then met our first **Red Brocket** and **Tapeti** on the drive back to Pouso Alegre. That night at the lodge, we explored the brush area behind the buildings and theraled an *Ferruginous Pygmy Owl* as well as multiple tree rodents, likely **Humid Chaco Arboreal Rice Rats**.



Crab-eating Fox



Capybara



Red Brocket



Marsh Deer

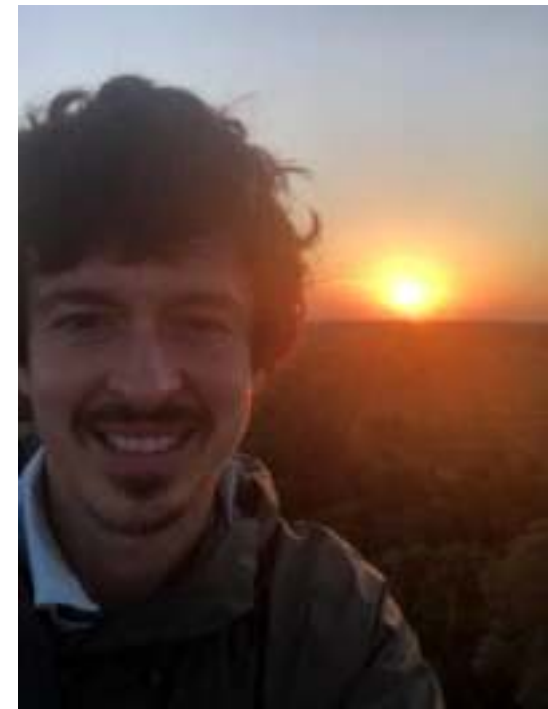


Humid Chaco Arboreal Rice Rat





At dawn we climbed the local tower in hopes of spotting a **Brazilian Tapir**, but to no avail. The drive along the Transpantaneira featured a streaking **Tayra**, and numerous stops to look under bridges for bats. The bridge immediately before Hotel Pantanal Mato Grosso in Pixiam turned out best, with a colony of **White-lined Broad-nosed Bat**. Only after braving the treacherous climb under the bridge, did we discover the nearby hotel had easy access to the same species under many of their roofs. The Transpantaneira was also the unfortunate site for road kill including **Jaguarundi**, **Crab-eating Raccoon** and **Southern Tamandua**.



White-lined Broad-nosed Bat





Capybara

Porto Jofre

The pressure to find a **Jaguar** was alleviated almost immediately. Soon after dusk, we came upon one of these gorgeous cats 20 minutes from our lodge at Fazenda Jofre Velho. It confidently stalked along the side of the road before crossing in front of us. If only mammal watching was always this easy. A large **Feral Water Buffalo** also made a brief appearance on this drive.





The entire following day, we took to the water. A packed breakfast and lunch allowed for maximum time on the river. The first seven hours went by mostly uneventful, peppered with birds, caimans, **Capibaras** and a pair of sexually dimorphic **Black-and-gold Howlers**. Before Covid, there may have been as many as 50 boats on the water searching for Jaguars, relaying

sightings to each other. Today there were only three. The rocking of the boat combined with the lack of activity was lulling me to sleep, but just before 2pm things kicked into high gear.



Black-and-gold Howler (female)





Capybara (with young)

Methodically walking along the river's edge was a stunning adult Jaguar. Moments would pass when the animal was obscured by foliage, only to reappear further down the river. At one point, it ventured out in the open along a sandy beach. We remained in close range to this iconic creature for over 30 minutes. Eventually, we were treated to a grand finale where the cat squished its way along the shore, climbed into the river and effortlessly swam behind our boat, across to the other side. These were the moments I dreamed of when planning this trip.





Further along, a family of **Giant Otters** provided an instant encore. They crawled up onto the river bank, noisily wrestling with one another and generally hamming it up for the camera. Later, another boat alerted us to our third Jaguar, resting within a dense undergrowth. We then spent our final boating hour close to the lodge, waiting for the sun to descend and the bats to arise. By dusk, we were surrounded by **Greater** and **Lesser Bulldog Bats** dive-bombing for fish.



Giant Otter



The following morning, we returned to the river in search of **Neotropical River Otters**. From experience, Juan suggested we try the Piquiri River. En route, we passed another largely hidden **Jaguar**, our fourth! Little time was wasted here before starting up the Piquiri. We made it as far as the Piquiri Lodge empty handed, before turning around and slowly heading back. It was late morning and I was losing hope until Juan shouted "Otter!" The solitary animal was distant at first, but oblivious to our advances as it played in the water amidst the mangrove roots. A brilliant zero-hour sighting in our final maritime voyage. My best ever views of an iconic *Tuco Toucan* provided an avian cherry on top. Back on dry land, our host led us to an abandoned building, home to more **White-lined Broad-nosed Bats**.



Neotropical River Otter



We dedicated both nights here to driving the airline road outside Hotel Porto Jofre. Rodent activity lit up the thermal, while incessant mosquitos lit up our limbs. Here, the only photos I managed were of **Brazilian Guinea Pigs**. Our lodge's access road proved fruitful as well, with a **Red Brocket** on the way out and my first **Ocelot** upon return to the parking area. This was welcome news to an Ocelot research team here, who had seen exactly zero Ocelots so far in their first few weeks.

Brazilian Guinea Pig



Ocelot



Piuval

The drive to Piuval Lodge featured more bat pit-stops. One abandoned building came complete with an animal carcass. Navigating these tight corners, unaware if a Jaguar may be inside, was an exhilarating yet unsettling experience. A small group of **Seba's Short-tailed Bats** hung from the ceiling in one room. Unbeknownst to us, a bee's nest clung to the same ceiling directly above the doorway. The instant I photographed the bats, a bee deposited its stinger into my chin, leaving it throbbing for the next hour. If only it was for a more unique species of bat.



Once at Piuval, a late afternoon drive revealed a rambunctious band of teenage **South American Coati** and our first **Azara's Agouti**. After nightfall, I was able to photograph my first **Tapeti**. The animal remained motionless in short grass, allowing us to approach quite close. Further along we saw more **Crab-eating Fox** and the trip's second **Ocelot**.



Each of our mornings here, we drove the short access road, eyes peeled for **Giant Anteaters** or **Southern Tamandua**. This effort failed, but a few minutes along the Transpantaneira did the trick. An aptly named Giant Anteater dashed across the dirt road in front of us. I snapped one clear photo before we parked and rushed out of the car. We pushed our way through a row of thick bushes, attempting to predict where the great beast might exit. Sure enough, it drove its colossal snout through the shrubbery and into an open field a mere ten feet from me. It pressed onward, seemingly unfettered by our presence. The next morning, second Giant Anteater was seen from a distance along the access road.

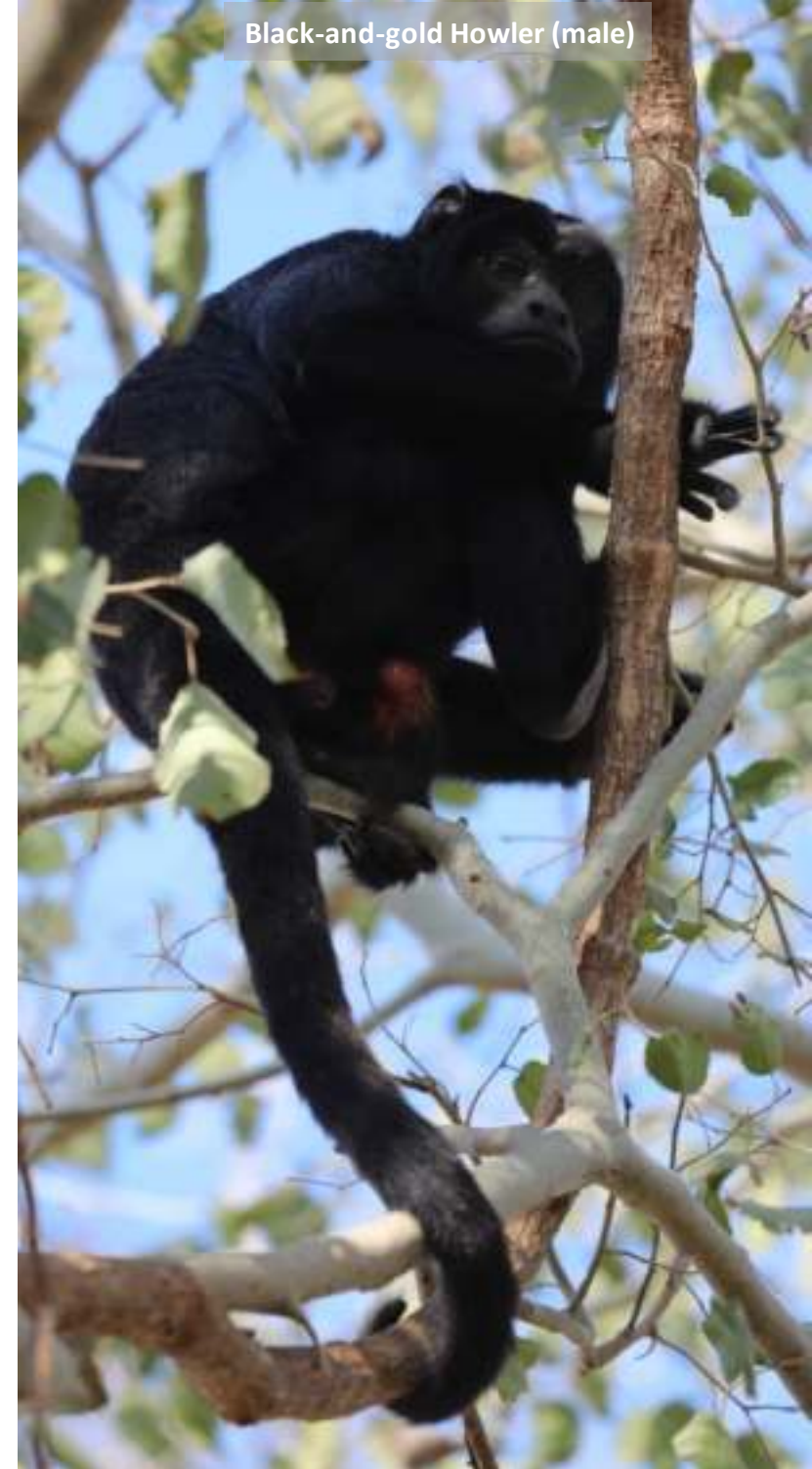


Our final afternoon in the Pantanal proved primate heavy with **Black-and-gold Howlers**, **Azaras's Capuchins** and **Black-tailed Marmosets**. I located the Marmosets using Leo's trick and listened for squeaks as we drove with the windows down. At dusk we awaited the emergence of bats we heard earlier in the day. What was likely a mix of **Velvety Free-tailed** and **Mexican Free-tailed Bats** had made their home in the roof of an overhang next to the Piuval Lake equipment shed. They were hesitant to show themselves, but would peek their heads out periodically. We subsequently found a lone **Lesser Bulldog Bat** at eyelevel inside one of the cramped rooms of the shed. After dinner, Juan's connections granted us use of the lodge's safari jeep free of charge. The open roof enabled us to witness an arboreal **Jaguar** in all its glory. This was a setting I'd expect for a Leopard, but not a Jaguar. The large carnivore watched us intently from its lofty perch before settling back to sleep. We relayed its location to the other guests at the lodge, who were delighted to find it had remained in the same tree.

The Pantanal was everything I had hoped for, practically doubling my trip list. And Juan knew the place like the back of his hand. That night I landed back in São Paulo to await my next adventure.



Azaras's Capuchin



Black-and-gold Howler (male)



Black-tailed Marmoset



Velvety Free-tailed Bat



Lesser Bulldog Bat





Superagüi:

Growing up, I had always known three species of Lion Tamarin. That was until I flipped through 1996's Pictorial Guide to the Living Primates and to my surprise there was now a fourth! The **Superagüi** or **Black-faced Lion Tamarin** was only discovered in 1990 and was the one type I hadn't seen in captivity already. After noticing that Jon Hall had luck with them on a trip to Superagüi Island in [2018](#), they quickly became my top primate target for the trip.

Eduardo Castro would be my excellent guide and translator from the mainland, although this was his first visit to Superagüi. We drove four hours from São Paulo to the coastal town of Cananéia where we met our island guide, Marcio, for a delectable seafood lunch at Sambaqui Restaurante. We then strapped in for a 90-minute motorboat ride across Dolphin's Bay to Superagüi. The bay stayed true to its name, providing plentiful **Guiana Dolphin** encounters.



Guiana Dolphins



Things on this remote island have developed in the three years since Jon Hall's visit. No longer is one expected to supply their own food. Marcio's family runs a fully functional hotel capable of providing three square meals a day- often locally caught seafood. The island remains a tight knit community where everyone knows one another and is quick to offer help. Thankfully the word was already out that I was looking for the Tamarins. Many of Marcio's neighbors had seen them in their own yards- a month ago, a couple weeks ago- but none in the past week.

Marcio's father was actually responsible for bringing the Tamarin to the attention of Western science. As the story goes, a couple of Brazilian scientists were at the local bar in Superagüi, when they saw the distinctive Tamarin skin Marcio's father kept with him like a lucky rabbit's foot. The scientists implored him to see a living specimen, which he then made happen. Unfortunately, Marcio's father was omitted from any credit in the discovery, so I wanted to be sure to recognize him here.



For the first two days we hiked far and wide in search of Tamarins. We played vocalizations from portable speakers intermittently, receiving only silence in response. Our second afternoon, Marcio brought us to a possible hotspot by boat, which we investigated until nightfall. We made our way back on foot all the while searching for nocturnal wildlife. We may not have found Tamarins, but we certainly found adventure, as the return hike proved treacherous twice over. First up was a decrepit wooden bridge standing 20 feet above a river. Missing planks at the middle were haphazardly replaced with thinner perpendicular beams of wood, bereft of any hand support. Eduardo stuck a long stick into the mud below to help steady himself as he tested out the bridge. He offered to ferry over my camera equipment in a water proof bag before I would attempt the tightrope act solo. Past our first hurdle, we soon arrived at a section of the trail now under high tide. A downed log got us most of the way over, but not without the sacrifice of dry feet. Wildlife along the way was limited to *Common Potoos* and a *Black-capped Screech Owl*. We returned to the lodge in time to enjoy a freshly caught, grilled whole fish. After dinner, Marcio's sons stared into their iPhones- far too reminiscent of teenagers back home.

Generally, the nights provided the only mammals we could find: several **Big-eared Opossums** in neighboring yards, bats in flight and a possible **Tate's Woolly Mouse Opossum** thermalled behind the shed on Marcio's father's property. The thermal size and subsequent large eyeshine suggested Mouse Opossum, but our sighting was distant and fleeting.





Our final full day began much like the others; trudging through the thick brush, broadcasting unrequited Tamarin calls to a seemingly empty forest. Time was split between land and boat, searching along a nearby river bank. Four unsuccessful hours later, we approached Marcio's dock when suddenly his wife burst into view. She ran towards our boat with a hurried determination, shouting in Portuguese. I had a good feeling about this.

Sure enough, her brother had just seen the Tamarins in his backyard! I began to run off the boat, but Marcio beckoned me back promising a shorter delivery by sea. We raced at motorboat speed, praying we would arrive in time. This was complete *déjà vu* to weeks earlier when Jon Hall and I sprinted by boat to see Napo Saki in Ecuador. Marcio let us off on a strip of beach, while he found a place to dock the boat. Eduardo and I ran along the beach, attempting our best Baywatch impressions, until my camera equipment began falling out of his backpack. We cartoonishly skidded to a halt, gathered up my things and trudged on. Heaving for breath, we arrived at the brother's home, with no Tamarins in sight. The owner assured us they hadn't gone far, and suggested we walk a short way into the forest. We played their call a few steps in and within seconds a few curious **Superagüi Tamarins** investigated the sound!



The comedy of errors continued as my camera failed on the first attempt, necessitating a power reset to fix the issue. As if that wasn't enough, the battery for our speaker soon died. I kept their attention by playing back their calls from a video I had just taken with my phone. We enjoyed their company for the better part of the next hour, constantly squeaking and going in and out of view in the trees above. The encounter was such a huge weight off my shoulders after coming all this way.

With the top target handled, I got greedy and started asking about **La Plata River Dolphins**. One of the locals was confident he had seen them, but in an area two hours away by boat. We tentatively planned to devote the afternoon/following morning to this "Family Lifer" dream quest, but the weather had different plans in mind. Another reminder to how lucky our timing with the Tamarins had been. We mostly hunkered down, until boating to the mainland the following morning, soaked under constant rain.

Eduardo returned me to São Paulo in time for my flight and was so ecstatic about seeing the Tamarins for the first time that he even refused a tip. Next stop: Porto Alegre.



Porto Alegre:

The **Lami Tuco-tuco** was the final and uniquely special target: a Family Lifer. Ahead of the trip, I scoured Brazil's mammal species for missing families and landed on Tuco-tucos. To complete my mission, Regina paired me up with Paulo Boute, the energetic and eccentric founder of the tour company I was currently employing.

He was excited to go over tomorrow's plan for the Tuco-tuco. For perhaps the first time in history, we intended to use playback to entice these rodents. I settled in for the night at Pousada Morada dos Bugios, a former love motel. This odd but comfortable location came complete with garages connected to each room, originally intended to provide the utmost in extramarital privacy.

We arrived at Banhado dos Pachecos Wildlife Refuge before 8am and met with their biologist, André Osório Rosa. He was employed by local construction companies to monitor any disturbance to the local Tuco-tuco population. As an underground dweller, these animals are very sensitive to loud vibrations. With luck, Osório already knew where the freshest mounds were.

However, the weather was far from ideal. It was bitterly cold, with 20 mile per hour winds biting at our faces. This isn't what one expects while visiting Brazil. I wore every layer imaginable and even borrowed a



blanket from the love motel. The first few holes Osório located had little refuge from the intense wind, so he continued searching. At last, he found the perfect set up: a freshly dug hole, shielded from the wind by a row of trees. Paulo set down the lawn chair he had been carrying and we proceeded to wait. Blanket in lap, camera in hand, an hour went by, then two and three. Still nothing. Paulo kindly offered to pick up and deliver lunch so I could remain trained on the hole. Despite the harsh conditions, I was kept as comfortable as possible.

Staring at a hole in the ground for hours, one's mind begins to wander. So, when dirt kicked up from this hole on hour four, I thought I must be hallucinating. Then I got my first brief view of a **Lami Tuco-tuco's** head. YES!!! Another Family Lifer for the books! But I was determined to secure photographic proof. Paulo sprung into action, using the speaker for playback and digging at the entrance with his fingers. The animal reappeared, but descended immediately at the raise of my camera. Paulo repeated his impression and this time I stood ready with my camera pointed on the hole. Success! I was able to snap five quick shots of the burrower from inside its hole. We all celebrated and made it back to the car.



For the remainder of the afternoon and into dusk we walked a trail at Morada dos Bugios, enjoying golden hour views of **Southern Brown Howlers**. That night was a thermaler's delight as we drove along the water on Banhado dos Pacheco road. We found **Capybara**, sleeping birds, and no less than seven rodents in an hour. The two I was able to photograph were likely a **Black-footed Pygmy Rice Rat** and a **Yellow Pygmy Rice Rat**.

At the airport the next morning, Paulo and I took celebratory selfies with my camera's Tuco-tuco screen. What a wild ride. Three weeks of traversing Brazil's different ecosystems culminating in nearly 60 species. And I still had a few more days' worth of captive collections to visit.



Southern Brown Howler





Captive Mammals:

1. Centro de Primatologia do Rio de Janeiro (CPRJ)

CPRJ had been on my radar ever since I saw Dr. Elias Sadalla Filho's photos of rarely exhibited primates like **Masked** and **Steven Nash's Titis** posted on Zooniverse.com. Although initially closed because of Covid, Elias's connections helped enormously in making a visit happen. Located about an hour outside of Rio de Janeiro, CPRJ doubles as both a research facility and rescue center for Brazilian primates, often formerly kept as pets. At the time of my visit, they held 29 different species, 13 of which were lifers. With so much diversity to cover, I actually visited twice, warmly received each time by Professor Alcides Pissinatti and then Silvia Bahadian Moreira. Below is a sampling of the unique species I was able to photograph:



Gold-and-white Marmoset



Martins's Tamarin



Chestnut-bellied Titi



Black-headed Uakari



Neblina Uakari



Caquetá Titi



Hershkovitz's Titi



Spix's Red-handed Howler



Buffy Saki

2. Parque Zoológico Municipal Quinzinho de Barros (Sorocaba Zoo)

I had the pleasure of meeting Elias for the first time by sharing a trip to Sorocaba's Zoo. We got along great as we quickly realized we shared the very niche interest of mammal watching both wild and captive. He once again had contacts here, who graciously gave us behind the scenes access, allowing for optimal photography opportunities. Armadillos were the theme of the day, with a captive lifer in **Greater Naked-tailed Armadillo** and a wild **Nine-banded Armadillo**. Introduced but wild **Northern Brown Howlers** were also present.

While at the Zoo, Elias casually mentioned a facility boasting all eight species of Brazilian deer, including both **Pygmy** and **Small Red Brocket**. I was floored! My flight home was initially scheduled that night, but I feverishly found one for the following night, while awaiting confirmation for a possible visit. With luck, Dr. José Maurício Barbanti Duarte of NUPECCE checked his email in time and welcomed my last-minute request. Elias put me up for the night and I got a chance to meet his wonderful family.





Greater Naked-tailed Armadillo



Northern Brown Howler



Brazilian Tapir (albino)



Brazilian Colocolo



Southern Muriqui



Eastern Black Tamarins

3. Nucleo de Pesquisa e Conservação de Cervídeos (NUPECCE)

NUPECCE was over a five hour's drive from São Paulo but worth every second. This unique facility is the world's preeminent center for the research and conservation of Neotropical deer. My timeline was intense. Renting a car, driving 5.5 hours, touring the center, and then another 5.5 hours back to the airport in time to catch a 10-hour flight home.

The visit played out like a surreal dream. One by one, research students led each deer species into a paddock while I waited inside. They would announce the species and then it would magically appear. Knowing how seldom photographed these smaller Brockets are made the experience all the more exhilarating.

I made it back to the airport with little time to spare. Home was long overdue and sorely missed, with 23 days in Brazil behind me and 35 days abroad overall.

Special Thanks To:

Fiona Reid, Venkat Sankar and Vladimir Dinets for their unmatched expertise in small mammal identification. And to Jon Hall for the Regina recommendation, and blazing so many of these remote trails that lead to rare mammals.





Small Red Brocket



Pygmy Brocket



Pita Brocket



Amazonian Brown Brocket

List of Mammal Species Seen:

(wild lifers in bold)

	Common Name	Scientific name	Alfonso Claudio	Caratinga	Caraca	Ilheus	Northern Pantanal	Superagüi	Porto Alegre	Rio /Sorocaba
1	Bare-tailed Woolly Opossum	<i>Caluromys philander</i>			X					
2	Big-eared Opossum	<i>Didelphis aurita</i>	X		X			X		
	• Tate's Woolly Mouse Opossum?	<i>Marmosa paraguayana</i>						X		
3	Gray Slender Opossum	<i>Marmosops incanus</i>			X					
4	Nine-banded Armadillo	<i>Dasyus novemcinctus</i>	Th							X
5	Six-banded Armadillo	<i>Euphractus sexcinctus</i>				X				
6	Maned Sloth	<i>Bradypus torquatus</i>	X							
7	Giant Anteater	<i>Myrmecophaga tridactyla</i>					X			
	• Southern Tamandua	<i>Tamandua tetradactyla</i>					Rk			
8	Buffy-headed Marmoset	<i>Callithrix flaviceps</i>		X						
9	Wied's Marmoset	<i>Callithrix kuhlii</i>				X				
10	Superagüi Lion Tamarin	<i>Leontopithecus caissara</i>						X		
11	Golden-headed Lion Tamarin	<i>Leontopithecus chrysomelas</i>				X				
12	Black-tailed Marmoset	<i>Mico melanurus</i>					X			
13	Azara's Capuchin	<i>Sapajus cay</i>					X			
14	Black Capuchin	<i>Sapajus nigritus</i>		X	X					
15	Golden-bellied Capuchin (no photo)	<i>Sapajus xanthosternus</i>				X				
16	Coastal Black-handed Titi (no photo)	<i>Callicebus melanochir</i>				X				
17	Masked Titi	<i>Callicebus personatus</i>	X							
18	Black-and-gold Howler	<i>Alouatta caraya</i>					X			
19	Northern Brown Howler	<i>Alouatta guariba guariba</i>	Hd	X						X
	• Southern Brown Howler	<i>Alouatta guariba clamitans</i>							X	
20	Northern Muriqui	<i>Brachyteles hypoxanthus</i>		X						
21	Common Tapetí	<i>Sylvilagus brasiliensis</i>					X			
22	Brazilian Squirrel	<i>Sciurus aestuans</i>			X					
23	Atlantic Forest Arboreal Rice Rat?	<i>Oecomys catherinae</i>			X					
24	Humid Chaco Arboreal Rice Rat?	<i>Oecomys franciscorum</i>					X			
25	Yellow Pygmy Rice Rat?	<i>Oligoryzomys flavescens</i>							X	
26	Black-footed Pygmy Rice Rat?	<i>Oligoryzomys nigripes</i>							X	
27	Bahia Porcupine	<i>Coendou insidiosus</i>				X				
28	Paraguayan Hairy Dwarf Porcupine	<i>Coendou spinosus</i>		X						

29	Brazilian Guinea Pig	<i>Cavia aperea</i>					X			
30	Capybara	<i>Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris</i>					X		X	X
31	Azara's Agouti	<i>Dasyprocta azarae</i>					X			
32	Lowland Paca (no photo)	<i>Cuniculus paca</i>	Th							
33	Lami Tuco-tuco	<i>Ctenomys lami</i>							X	
34	Greater Sac-winged Bat	<i>Saccopteryx bilineata</i>				X				
35	Pallas's Long-tongued Bat	<i>Glossophaga soricina</i>	X			X				
36	Little Big-eared Bat	<i>Micronycteris megalotis</i>				X				
37	Silky Short-tailed Bat	<i>Carollia brevicauda</i>	X							
38	Seba's Short-tailed Bat	<i>Carollia perspicillata</i>	X	X			X			
39	Fringe-lipped Bat	<i>Trachops cirrhosus</i>					X			
40	White-lined Broad-nosed Bat	<i>Platyrrhinus lineatus</i>					X			
41	Little Yellow-shouldered Bat	<i>Sturnira lilium</i>			X					
42	Lesser Bulldog Bat	<i>Noctilio albiventris</i>					X			
43	Greater Bulldog Bat (no photo)	<i>Noctilio leporinus</i>					X			
44	Wagner's Bonneted Bat	<i>Eumops glaucinus</i>					X			
45	Velvety Free-tailed Bat	<i>Molossus molossus</i>					X			
46	Mexican Free-tailed Bat?	<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>					X			
47	Guiana Dolphin	<i>Sotalia guianensis</i>				X		X		
48	Marsh Deer	<i>Blastocerus dichotomus</i>					X			
49	Red Brocket	<i>Mazama americana</i>					X			
50	Gray Brocket	<i>Mazama gouazoubira</i>			X		X			
51	Feral Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalis bubalis</i>					X			
52	Crab-eating Fox	<i>Cerdocyon thous</i>					X			
53	Maned Wolf	<i>Chrysocyon brachyurus</i>			X					
54	Ocelot	<i>Leopardus pardalis</i>					X			
	• Jaguarundi	<i>Herpailurus yagouaroundi</i>					Rk			
55	Jaguar	<i>Panthera onca</i>					X			
56	Tayra (no photo)	<i>Eira barbara</i>					X			
57	Neotropical River Otter	<i>Lontra longicaudis</i>					X			
58	Giant Otter	<i>Pteronura brasiliensis</i>					X			
59	South American Coati	<i>Nasua nasua</i>					X			
	• Crab-eating Raccoon	<i>Procyon cancrivorus</i>					Rk			

Th= Thermal Imager only

Hd= Heard only

Rk= Road Kill only