



Photo: Marcelo Gavensky



Barba Azul (Blue-throated Macaw) Reserve & Trinidad – Beni, Bolivia

August 26th to 30th, 2018

Trip report for mammalwatching.com by Marcelo Gavensky
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Introduction:

This is a partial trip report from a much longer (36 days long) guiding birding tour with two passengers in the tropics of Bolivia. Birdwatching was the main aim of the tour, but a special attention was given to mammals and other wildlife seen during it. We made no particular effort in looking for small mammals, nor bat refuges.

Since the passengers preferred to avoid flying in small aircrafts, we travelled from Trinidad to Barba Azul (and the way back) by car, which proved to be quite attractive for nature lovers, although a bit long and exhausting as well (next time I would recommend going by car -only possible during dry season- and flying back).

I decided to leave the bird species names mentioned on the day-by-day notes in case anyone is interested in them (I apologize to the non-birding readers).

Day-by-day notes:

DAY 1 (August 25th): this day we travelled from Santa Cruz de la Sierra to Trinidad, and was meant to rest in this town and get recovered from jet lag (my passengers were from England), having in mind that we were going to start a very long tour and we needed to be in good conditions for it. We birded in the central square after lunch, where we saw many birds including Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Rufous Cacholote and Little Woodpecker. We also saw a couple of **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths**, which were probably taken there by locals.

DAY 2 (August 26th): we took a land transfer connection (with a local taxi driver on a 4x4 car) leaving Trinidad at 5 AM. On the road before San Javier we saw many Scissor-tailed Nightjars as well as some Little Nightjars, before sunrise. The landscape that we were able to see after sunrise, until a few kilometres before arriving in Santa Ana (the nearest town to Blue-throated Macaw reserve) was very natural and attractive, going from Varzea forest to



open marshes and drier areas (and all the transitional zones), teeming with birds that were easy to see from the car. Lots of Jabiru storks, Green Ibis, Black-collared Hawk, Crane Hawk and more. **Greater Capybaras** and Jacare Caimans were very easy to see there as well. We crossed the (huge) Mamoré river on a car ferry and got our first **Bolivian River Dolphin** of the trip, which blew only 15 metres away from the ferry (it was a very good view). In Santa Ana we met the guide who lead us to Blue-throated Macaw reserve (riding his motorbike in front of the car) and started our way to that place. The landscape between Santa Ana and the reserve very much changed, turning into an open grassland country with scattered forest island. It looked very dry, and we saw there White-rumped and Grey Monjitas. The area had some narrow rivers and water ponds where Caimans were abundant. We finally made it to the reserve and arrived there around 2:30 PM, when the reserve's staff was awaiting for us with lunch ready. After lunch we made a relatively short birding hike to the air strip area, seeing some more grassland species, as well as many Blue-and-yellow Macaws, **Crab-eating Fox**, **Nine-banded** and **Six-banded (Yellow) Armadillos**.

DAY 3 (August 27th): this was a GREAT day. We started with a light breakfast at 6 AM, after hearing the loud barks of a Maned Wolf really close to the cabins. After breakfast we went out for a birding hike to a nearby forest, with good views of a marsh and an open grassland. Best birds here where our first Blue-throated Macaws (a group of 5) flying over our heads at low height. In the forest we saw Large-billed Antwren (male and female) and the marsh included Black-capped Donacobius. We also heard Rusty-backed Spinetail in the forest and saw a group of **South American Coati**. A family of **Paraguayan Howlers** was very well seen there as well. In the afternoon we crossed the river Omi (by boat) in order to get to an afternoon meeting place for the Blue-throated Macaws. Saw our first Hoatzins from the boat. After crossing the river we walked along the forest edge (between the forest and the river, in a sort of grassland strip) and saw **Nine-banded Armadillos**, a **Collared Peccari**, a few **Azara's Agoutis** and an amazing **Maned Wolf** which walked in front of us, giving us a 10-15 minutes view, with perfect light on it. We were really impressed. We got to the special point for the macaws and saw around 20 Blue-throated Macaws, alongside many Blue-and-yellow Macaws. On the way back to the boat we saw lots of **Nine-banded Armadillos** and at dusk plenty of Nacunda Nighthawks, and large bats coming out of the forest. Before getting to the boat we had amazing views of a Great Potoo. Had a piranha dinner and called it a day.



DAY 4 (August 28th): we took a boat tour in the morning in the river Omi, where we saw aquatic birds such as Black-bellied Whistling-duck, Unicolored Blackbird and an immature Azure Gallinule. Back in the lodge we took a hike towards the air strip and added Dark-throated and Tawny-bellied Seedeaters, as well as having great views of a White-rumped Monjita. In the afternoon we crossed the river again in order to visit the Cerrado habitat and the grasslands where Cock-tailed Tyrant live. On the way we saw more **Nine-banded Armadillos**, **Crab-eating Fox**, a **Common Red Brocket** and a soaring adult Ornate Hawk-Eagle, which turned out to be the first record for the reserve. We took a trail across a forest island (with mainly motacú palm) and found a Crane Hawk perched on a tree. Once in the Cerrado habitat there was not much bird activity but we found and had amazing views of three Sharp-tailed Tyrants, as well as a Black-faced Tanager. We also saw a distant **Pampas Deer**. While entering the grassland we saw a **Collared Peccari** and found Black-masked Finch and Grass Wren, but were not able to find the Cock-tailed Tyrant because it was very late and getting dark. We walked back to the boat across the the forest (already at night) where we saw a (**Common**) **Black-eared Opossum**, and found the Great Potoo at the same place as the previous night.

DAY 5 (August 29th): we started our way back to Trinidad at 8 AM, and on the grasslands along the way we tried our last chances for the Cock-tailed Tyrant. We found them about 10 kilometres away from the lodge, and had great views of three males and one female. Later in the big extensions of the Llanos de Moxos we saw an enormous **Giant Anteater** walking across the road. The landscape from the lodge to a few kilometres before arriving in Santa Ana includes grasslands and patches of Cerrado ("campo limpo"). In this last habitat we heard White-rumped Tanagers. Closer to Santa Ana there were palm savannas and a transition between Cerrado and Varzea Amazon forest. While crossing the Mamoré river we saw more **Bolivian River Dolphins** swimming around the ferry. Afterwards there were more palm savannas, tall Varzea forests, "Cerradao" and "Campo sujo" cerrados. We arrived in Trinidad before 5 PM.

DAY 6 (August 30th): we took advantage of some spare time due to a change in the departure time of our flight to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and made a short visit to Puerto Ballivian, which is 8 kilometres south of Trinidad. On the way (through Trinidad outskirts and a paved road



across a flood valley) we saw Black-backed Water-Tyrant, Solitary Black Cacique, Black-collared Hawk, Gray-cowled Woodrail and more. Once in Puerto Ballivian we looked for birds in the river and took a trail along the Varzea forest. New birds here include Sulphure-bellied Manakin-Tyrant and Black-fronted Nunbird. Afterwards we took our flight connection to Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

List of mammals seen during the trip (15 species):

(Common) Black-eared Opossum – *Didelphis marsupialis*
Nine-banded Armadillo – *Dasybus novemcinctus*
Six-banded (Yellow) Armadillo – *Euphractus sexcinctus*
Giant Anteater – *Myrmecophaga tridactyla*
Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth – *Bradypus variegatus*
Paraguayan Howler – *Alouatta caraya*
Greater Capybara – *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*
Azara's Agouti – *Dasyprocta azarae*
Bolivian River Dolphin – *Inia boliviensis*
Collared Peccary – *Pecari tajacu*
Pampas Deer – *Ozotoceros bezoarticus*
Common Red Brocket – *Mazama americana*
Maned Wolf – *Chrysocyon brachyurus*
Crab-eating Fox – *Cerdocyon thous*
South American Coati – *Nasua nasua*



Bird species highlights (from a total of 183 species seen/heard):

Greater Rhea, Hoatzin, Azure Gallinule, Jabiru, Upland Sandpiper, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Toco Toucan, Yellow-crowned Amazon, Orange-winged Amazon, Blue-throated Macaw, Blue-and-yellow Macaw, Red-and-green Macaw, Great Potoo, Scissor-tailed Nightjar, Large-billed Antwren, Sharp-tailed Tyrant, Streamer-tailed Tyrant, Cock-tailed Tyrant, Tawny-bellied Seedeater, Dark-throated Seedeater.

Complete bird and mammal (plus 1 reptile: Yacare Caiman) list:

https://ecoregistros.org/site_en/checklist.php?id=3354 *

*Ecoregistros.org is an Argentine website where anyone can upload records (photographs, only-seen and only-heard) of wildlife from all over the world, including birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, butterflies and more. I personally keep my Argentine and South American bird lifelist on it and am working in updating my world mammal lifelist too.

Birds and mammals photo records (all were taken during the trip)

Sharp-tailed Tyrant – Photo: Marcelo Gavensky



Cock-tailed Tyrant (male) – Photo: Marcelo Gavensky



Paraguayan Howler (female) – Photo: Marcelo Gavensky



Nine-banded Armadillo – Photo: Marcelo Gavensky



Maned Wolf – Photo: Marcelo Gavensky



Giant Anteater – Photo: Marcelo Gavensky

