

Trip report
Pantanal – Brazil
July 20 – August 1, 2018

Report by tour leader Karl-Olof Bergman



During two weeks in July-August 2018, Bergman Nature Tours visited Pantanal with a new group of wildlife hungry travellers. Pantanal consists of a mosaic of wetlands, forests and drier savannah-like areas. Pantanal stretches over three countries, the majority located in Brazil (70%), while the remainder is in Bolivia (20%) and Paraguay (10%). During the rainy season the water rises two to five meters in the rivers and 80% of the Pantanal become flooded in the world's largest wetland, nearly 1000 km long and 500 km wide. The annual floods bring nutrient-rich sludge that makes the area extremely productive and that is the reason the area has South America's highest densities of larger animals. The main goal of the trip was to photograph the normally so shy jaguar. The special feature here is that jaguars are very tolerant of the presence of people after many years of absence of hunting and that provides often unique photo opportunities. In addition, as Pantanal also is home to a number of other iconic mammals and birds we wanted to try to see some of them also.

We started from the northern parts of Pantanal and travelled along the Transpantaneira, a road that was built to facilitate the transport of livestock out of the area. Nowadays, it is being used more and more to bring wildlife interested people from all over the world into this area. The journey started off well with a rich bird life already along the way to our first ranch.



We had nice observations of greater rhea and snail kites were spotted from each and every bush. A very nice encounter was made already on the first day, a giant anteater was walking in the savannah landscape and was seen from the safari truck. The trip continued just as well with, among other things, roseate spoonbills, black-bellied whistling duck and ponds full of sunbathing caimans. Tired and satisfied, we then arrived at our first stop, a ranch located along the Transpantaneira. In the sunrise the following day we did our first walk on foot and were lucky to see both toco toucan and Azaras's capuchin monkeys.





Photo: Tommi Sandberg

A surprise then awaited right next to the accommodation when we discovered a southern tamandua, which climbed on a tree and went to sleep inside a termite nest.

A stone's throw from the lodge, we have one of Pantanal's many rivers. Here we enjoyed the first boat trip of the tour with a lot of wildlife close up to our boats.

We were given several occasions to photograph cocoi herons, black-collared hawks and great black hawk that swept down to catch fish close to our boats.



Photo: Carina Eliasson

A number of other beautiful birds were also seen on this first lodge. We had nice sightings of wattled jacana, who nested in a pond next to our lodge and flocks of yellow-billed cardinals flew around right next to the restaurant. Pantanal also has several endemic bird species and one of the species we got nice photo opportunities of was the chestnut-bellied guan. This big bird was



heavily hunted in many parts of the distribution area but it has now a good population on this ranch. After two nice days, we made the long trip down to the Cuiaba River. The trip down also offered nice photo opportunities. Most surprising, perhaps, was the finding of ferruginous pygmy owl, which were hidden in the leaves of a tree. The brilliantly colored scarlet-headed blackbird was another nice observation along the way.

The day after it was time for the very first river trip in the protected wetland area in the middle of Pantanal where several rivers meet to create one of the world's best jaguar habitats. We opened up with a family of charming giant otters who hunted for fish and marked their territories on the river bank. Threatened and very rare elsewhere, but here they played in front of our boats!



Photo: Tommi Sandberg



Shortly thereafter, Fabricio, our local guide, pointed towards the dense forest along the river and said the magic word - jaguar. After quite a bit of staring into the bushes, we found it too. A beautiful jaguar rested deep in among the trees, almost invisible. After a while the jaguar showed itself on the beach and we were given the opportunity to follow it walking along the beach. It was the first of a total of twelve jaguar meetings during the five days we spent on the river! Our strategy of taking lunch out on the river instead of spending several hours each day returning to the lodge proved once more to lead to exciting meetings beyond the usual. At our jaguar meetings we take it cool, and even if the jaguar is resting, we are waiting. This paid off also on this trip. In total, we saw three successful hunts, two caimans and a capybara were hunted down by jaguars in front of our boats!

The environment in the area where the jaguars mainly hunts along the dry beach banks and avoid the wetlands make it possible to follow their hunts in a unique way by boat. The adrenaline kick that you get when you can follow a hunting jaguar is unbeatable.

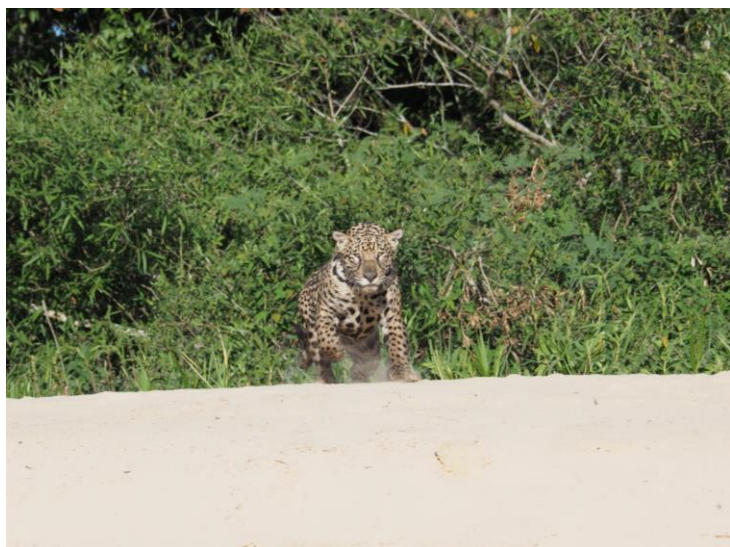


Photo: Tomas Wallen



Photo: Yvonne Dresler

The most exciting encounter was when a jaguar female after a long walk along the riverbank suddenly jumped and caught a capybara in the high the grass in front of one of our boats. Normally, the jaguar kills quickly by stabbing the canines through the skull but here the female did not get the right grip, and she had to struggle for a while before she managed to lay down the capybara. Everything captured by our cameras!



Another jaguar killed a caiman behind the tall grass but the other caiman was caught in the open by a swimming jaguar! The jaguar swam along the wetland vegetation and suddenly there was a splash and everything was over in a few seconds. What a wonderful sighting!



Photo: Tommi Sandberg

We saw jaguars all five days - jaguars who rested, walked, swam, washed themselves, showed their cubs and, not least, hunted. Seeing how relaxed the jaguars were in front of our boats and clicking cameras felt really good. One of the more remarkable experiences of animals that do not care that there are boats with people was when a cocoi heron landed a few meters in front of our boats, between us and a jaguar who rested on the beach. The heron was completely unaware of that a jaguar watched it with great interest from one side and a boatload of people from the other side. The heron started hunting for fish, all while all of us were sitting on nails to see if the jaguar was going to try a jump. However, the jaguar decided that the distance was too long for a jump and the heron successfully caught a fish in front of us, what a fun experience!

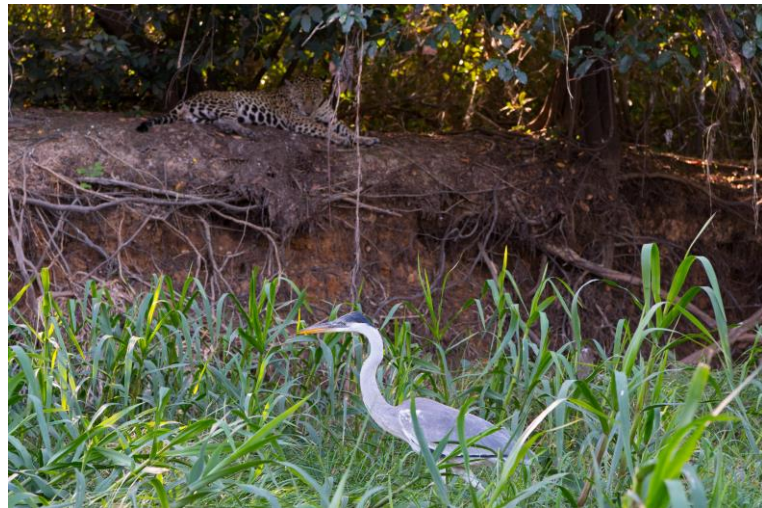




Foto: Tommi Sandberg

These totally relaxed jaguars have increased the tourism in the area, and led to reduced hunting and jaguars are now contributing significantly to the local economy, they have become more worth living than dead, just what we want to support with our travels. That feels good.





Photo: Tomas Wallen



One of the journey's obvious highlights was also meetings with the world's largest macaw, the highly threatened hyacinth macaw. Pantanal houses the majority of the world population and the ranches we visit work actively with the preservation of these magnificent birds.



The strange black skimmer was another long-awaited bird we saw on a sand bank along the river.



Then it was time to visit the next ranch along the Transpantaneira. Here tapir was high on our wish list. The luck was on our side. We had fantastic opportunities to photograph an individual who walked right next to our car during a night drive. During the same night drive we also spotted another cat, an ocelot!

During our other we also saw red and brown brocket deers, collared peccaries, coatis and Azaras's agouti. Here we also saw some exciting reptiles, red-footed tortoise and black and white tegu. There were also a large number of caimans in some of the remaining water ponds during the dry season, which gave outstanding opportunities to study them in close-up. Seeing how Azaras's capuchin monkeys was feasting on an ant nest up in a tree was another highlight during a morning trip.



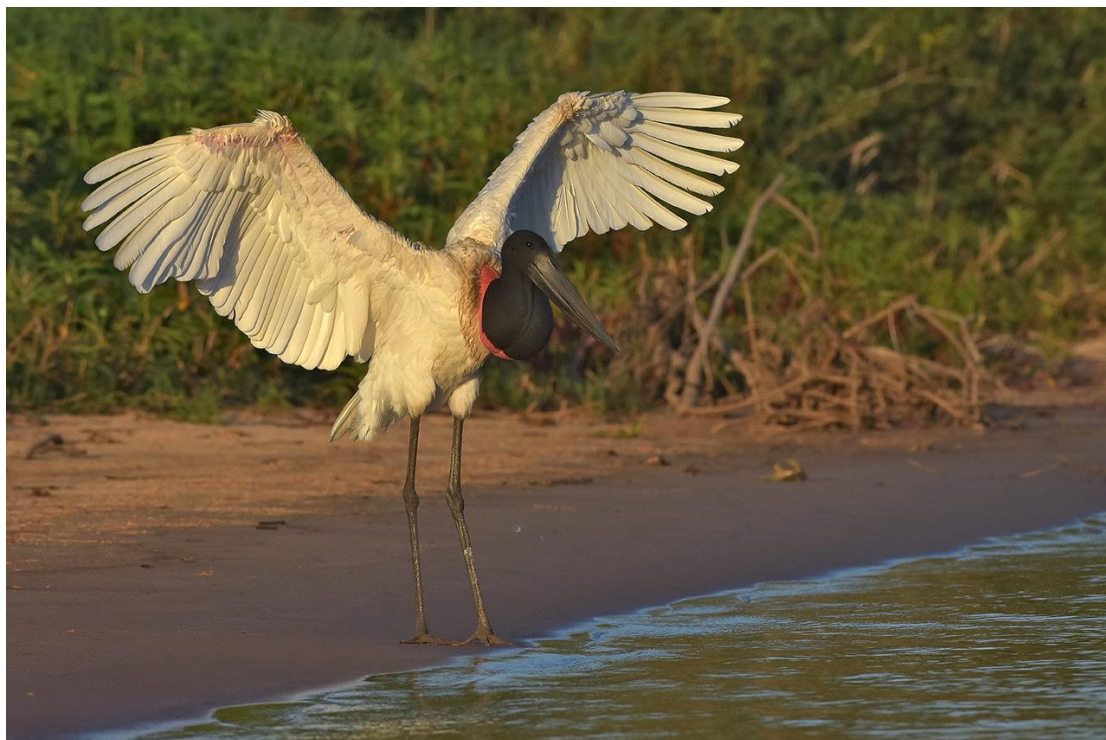


Photo: Tommi Sandberg





Then it was time for the last ranch of the trip, a ranch that has taken great steps towards a more wildlife-friendly management since the number of nature interested tourists started to increase. Here we took tractors through the wetlands to a beautiful river with sunbathing caimans, a large colony of wood storks and roseate spoonbills that regularly crossed the beautiful evening light to the delight of the photographers of the tour.





Our early morning walk at the ranch gave a nice observation, a southern tamandua that walked without taking notice of us in search of termites and other food.



As this ranch is a bit higher, there was an exciting forest to explore here that gave several new species. We had good observations of pale-crested woodpecker and rufous-tailed jacamar.



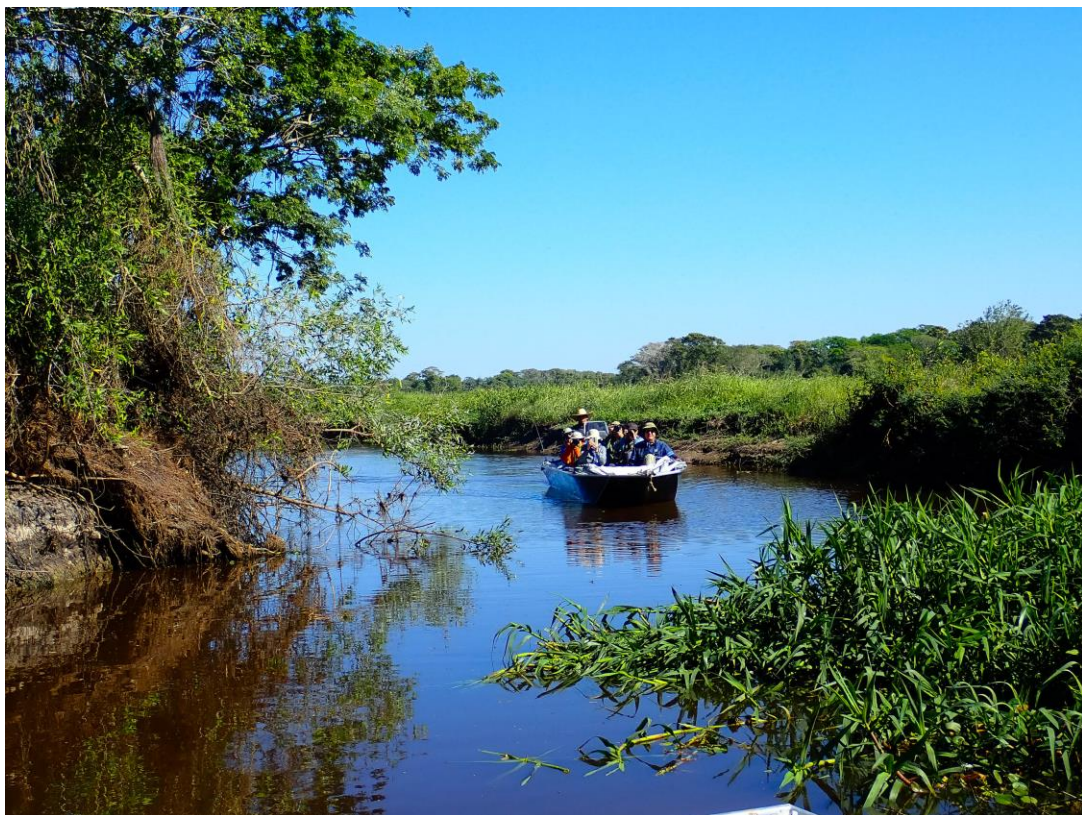
Photo: Tommi Sandberg

Two new mammals also appeared, black-tailed marmosets and black howler monkeys. When we almost gave up the hope of finding some new species on our last drive on the trip, it suddenly stood there, the long-awaited red-legged seriema, a bird with only one more species in the whole family. The two species of seriemas are considered to be the closest relatives of a group of extinct giant carnivorous birds, the so-called terror birds. A good end to our trip!





Photo: Tomas Wallen



In summary, the trip gave us a number of unforgettable nature experiences. And then we have just mentioned a fraction of the 179 species of mammals, birds and reptiles that we saw on the trip... We thank all our travellers for sharing these amazing experiences with us. What a fun trip it became!

Photo information:

Photos by our clients has their names in the photo byline, other photos are taken by the tour leaders.

Birds



Common Name

Latin name

Greater Rhea	<i>Rhea americana</i>	X
Undulated Tinamou	<i>Crypturellus undulatus</i>	X
Southern Screamer	<i>Chauna torquata</i>	X
White-faced Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	X
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>	X
Muscovy Duck	<i>Cairina moschata</i>	X
Brazilian Teal	<i>Amazonetta brasiliensis</i>	X
Chaco Chachalaca	<i>Ortalis canicollis</i>	X
Chestnut-bellied Guan	<i>Penelope ochrogaster</i>	X
Blue-throated Piping-Guan	<i>Pipile cumanensis</i>	X
Bare-faced Curassow	<i>Crax fasciolata</i>	X
Maguari Stork	<i>Ciconia maguari</i>	X
Jabiru	<i>Jabiru mycteria</i>	X
Wood Stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>	X
Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>	X
Anhinga	<i>Anhinga anhinga</i>	X
Rufescent Tiger-Heron	<i>Tigrisoma lineatum</i>	X
Cocoi Heron	<i>Ardea cocoi</i>	X
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	X
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	X
Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	X
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	X
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	X
Whistling Heron	<i>Syrigma sibilatrix</i>	X
Capped Heron	<i>Pilherodius pileatus</i>	X
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	X
Boat-billed Heron	<i>Cochlearius cochlearius</i>	X
Green Ibis	<i>Mesembrinibis cayennensis</i>	X
Bare-faced Ibis	<i>Phimosus infuscatus</i>	X
Plumbeous Ibis	<i>Theristicus caerulescens</i>	X
Buff-necked Ibis	<i>Theristicus caudatus</i>	X
Roseate Spoonbill	<i>Platalea ajaja</i>	X
Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	X
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	X
Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture	<i>Cathartes burrovianus</i>	X
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	X
Black-collared Hawk	<i>Busarellus nigricollis</i>	X
Snail Kite	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>	X
Long-winged Harrier	<i>Circus buffoni</i>	X

Crane Hawk	<i>Geranospiza caerulescens</i>	X
Savanna Hawk	<i>Buteogallus meridionalis</i>	X
Great Black-Hawk	<i>Buteogallus urubitinga</i>	X
Roadside Hawk	<i>Rupornis magnirostris</i>	X
Sunbittern	<i>Eurypyga helias</i>	X
Gray-necked Wood-Rail	<i>Aramides cajaneus</i>	X
Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinicus</i>	X
Limpkin	<i>Aramus guarauna</i>	X
Pied Lapwing	<i>Vanellus cayanus</i>	X
Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>	X
Collared Plover	<i>Charadrius collaris</i>	X
Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	X
Wattled Jacana	<i>Jacana jacana</i>	X
Yellow-billed Tern	<i>Sternula superciliaris</i>	X
Large-billed Tern	<i>Phaetusa simplex</i>	X
Black Skimmer	<i>Rynchops niger</i>	X
Pale-vented Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas cayennensis</i>	X
Ruddy Ground-Dove	<i>Columbina talpacoti</i>	X
Picui Ground-Dove	<i>Columbina picui</i>	X
Long-tailed Ground-Dove	<i>Uropelia campestris</i>	X
White-tipped Dove	<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>	X
Gray-fronted Dove	<i>Leptotila rufaxilla</i>	X
Little Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzua minuta</i>	X
Guira Cuckoo	<i>Guira guira</i>	X
Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i>	X
Tropical Screech-Owl	<i>Megascops choliba</i>	X
Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	X
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl	<i>Glaucidium brasilianum</i>	X
Nacunda Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles nacunda</i>	X
Common Pauraque	<i>Nyctidromus albicollis</i>	X
Rufous Nightjar	<i>Antrostomus rufus</i>	X
Planalto Hermit	<i>Phaethornis pretrei</i>	X
Black-throated Mango	<i>Anthracothorax nigricollis</i>	X
Ringed Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle torquata</i>	X
Amazon Kingfisher	<i>Chloroceryle amazona</i>	X
Green Kingfisher	<i>Chloroceryle americana</i>	X
American Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Chloroceryle aenea</i>	X
Rufous-tailed Jacamar	<i>Galbula ruficauda</i>	X
Chestnut-eared Aracari	<i>Pteroglossus castanotis</i>	X
Toco Toucan	<i>Ramphastos toco</i>	X
White Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes candidus</i>	X
Little Woodpecker	<i>Veniliornis passerinus</i>	X
Golden-green Woodpecker	<i>Piculus chrysochloros</i>	X
Campo Flicker	<i>Colaptes campestris</i>	X
Pale-crested Woodpecker	<i>Celeus lugubris</i>	X
Lineated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus lineatus</i>	X
Red-legged Seriema	<i>Cariama cristata</i>	X
Southern Caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>	X
Yellow-headed Caracara	<i>Milvago chimachima</i>	X
Laughing Falcon	<i>Herpetotheres cachinnans</i>	X
Nanday Parakeet	<i>Nandayus nenday</i>	X
Monk Parakeet	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>	X
Peach-fronted Parakeet	<i>Aratinga aurea</i>	X

Hyacinth Macaw	<i>Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus</i>	X
Red-and-green Macaw	<i>Ara chloropterus</i>	X
Yellow-collared Macaw	<i>Primolius auricollis</i>	X
Yellow-chevroned Parakeet	<i>Brotogeris chiriri</i>	X
Scaly-headed Parrot	<i>Pionus maximiliani</i>	X
Turquoise-fronted Parrot	<i>Amazona aestiva</i>	X
Great Antshrike	<i>Taraba major</i>	X
Band-tailed Antbird	<i>Hypocnemoides maculicauda</i>	X
Great Rufous Woodcreeper	<i>Xiphocolaptes major</i>	X
Straight-billed Woodcreeper	<i>Dendroplex picus</i>	X
Red-billed Scythebill	<i>Campylorhamphus trochilirostris</i>	X
Narrow-billed Woodcreeper	<i>Lepidocolaptes angustirostris</i>	X
Pale-legged Hornero	<i>Furnarius leucopus</i>	X
Rufous Hornero	<i>Furnarius rufus</i>	X
Greater Thornbird	<i>Phacellodomus ruber</i>	X
Yellow-chinned Spinetail	<i>Certhiaxis cinnamomeus</i>	X
White-lored spinetail	<i>Synallaxis albilora</i>	X
Common Tody-Flycatcher	<i>Todirostrum cinereum</i>	X
Vermilion Flycatcher	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>	X
White-rumped Monjita	<i>Xolmis velatus</i>	X
Black-backed Water-Tyrant	<i>Fluvicola albiventer</i>	X
White-headed Marsh Tyrant	<i>Arundinicola leucocephala</i>	X
Cattle Tyrant	<i>Machetornis rixosa</i>	X
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tuberculifer</i>	X
Lesser Kiskadee	<i>Pitangus lictor</i>	X
Great Kiskadee	<i>Pitangus sulphuratus</i>	X
Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>	X
Purplish Jay	<i>Cyanocorax cyanomelas</i>	X
Southern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx ruficollis</i>	X
Brown-chested Martin	<i>Progne tapera</i>	X
White-winged Swallow	<i>Tachycineta albiventer</i>	X
White-rumped Swallow	<i>Tachycineta leucorrhoa</i>	X
Thrush-like Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus turdinus</i>	X
Black-capped Donacobius	<i>Donacobius atricapilla</i>	X
Rufous-bellied Thrush	<i>Turdus rufiventris</i>	X
Chalk-browed Mockingbird	<i>Mimus saturninus</i>	X
Yellow-billed Cardinal	<i>Paroaria capitata</i>	X
Silver-beaked Tanager	<i>Ramphocelus carbo</i>	X
Sayaca Tanager	<i>Thraupis sayaca</i>	X
Palm Tanager	<i>Thraupis palmarum</i>	X
Saffron Finch	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>	X
Blue-black Grassquit	<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>	X
Rusty-collared Seedeater	<i>Sporophila collaris</i>	X
White-bellied Seedeater	<i>Sporophila leucoptera</i>	X
Red-crested Finch	<i>Coryphospingus cucullatus</i>	X
Bananaquit	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>	X
Grayish Saltator	<i>Saltator coerulescens</i>	X
Chopi Blackbird	<i>Gnorimopsar chopi</i>	X
Scarlet-headed Blackbird	<i>Amblyramphus holosericeus</i>	X
Epaulet oriole	<i>Icterus cayanensis</i>	X
Bay-winged Cowbird	<i>Agelaioides badius</i>	X
Giant Cowbird	<i>Molothrus oryzivorus</i>	X

Orange-backed Troupial
Solitary Cacique
Yellow-rumped Cacique
Crested Oropendola

Icterus croconotus
Cacicus solitarius
Cacicus cela
Psarocolius decumanus

X
X
X
X

Reptiles



Common Name

Red-footed tortoise
Pantanal swamp turtle
Yacaré caiman
Green iguana
Spiny lizards
Golden tegu
Black and white tegu
Caiman lizard
Giant racerunner
Racers

Latin name

Chelonoides carbonaria
Acanthochelys macrocephala
Caiman yacare
Iguana iguana
Tropidurus sp.
Tupinambis teguixin
Tupinambis merianae
Dracaena paraguayensis
Ameiva ameiva
Philodryas sp.

X
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