

Trip Report: Brazil (Mata Atlântica)

November 2006 (David Southall)

This report captures highlights from a couple of free days over the Thanksgiving long weekend at the end of a business trip to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Emma and I spent one night at the Guapi Assu Lodge some two hours from Rio and then two nights at the Pousada Picinguaba four hours south of Rio (and we also saw some birds around the lagoons in the Barra region of Rio).

Guapi Assu is part of a conservation effort covering some 6,500 hectares of Mata Atlântica (Atlantic forest), under the auspices of REGUA and a UK registered charity BART. Much of the lower altitude areas of the property have been farmed for many years and REGUA is undertaking the restoration of wetlands and reforestation initiatives in some buffer zones.

On our arrival at Guapi Assu our host, Nicholas Locke (whose family have been in the area for almost 100 years), escorted us around a selection of trails near the lodge and the wetlands. We enjoyed seeing the reforestation progress, hearing about the other conservation and education initiatives underway and, of course, seeing the large number of new species we encountered. Highlights included Brazilian Tanager, Brazilian and Masked Ducks, Blue Dacnis, Yellow-lored Tody-Flycatcher, Field (Campo) Flicker, White Woodpecker, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird and Black Jacobin. The elevated hide above the wetlands gave us views of caiman lurking in the waters as well as panoramas across the wetlands and surrounding hills.



Blue Dacnis (immature); Yellow-lored Tody-Flycatcher

We then joined Nicholas and his wife Raquel for an excellent dinner in the *pousada*, where we celebrated our first day of birding in Brazil and the success of the other three guests who had successfully searched for reclusive Blue-bellied Parrots along one of the longer and more demanding trails on the property.

At dawn Nicholas joined me for a walk along one of the new forest trails close to the lodge. We had excellent views of Long-billed Wren, Blue Manakin (only the all green female was seen), Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Chestnut-backed Antshrike and some alarmingly large looking cat prints in the mud. Meanwhile, Emma headed off to see the release, as part of a reintroduction programme, of some radio-tracked Red-billed Curassows. By 10am we were on our way back to Rio.

The very friendly atmosphere and comfortable lodge, conservation initiatives, diverse habitats and access to other Mata Atlântica regions certainly makes for an attractive package - our rushed trip barely scratched the surface of the possibilities at Guapi Assu and the surrounding areas.



Swallow-tailed Hummingbirds



The view at Guapi Assu

From Guapi Assu we returned to Rio to join Willie and Mandy (former colleagues of Emma's from the British Embassy in Caracas) and their friends Patti and Fred for a two night beach trip.

First stop was the UNESCO listed colonial town of Paraty, some 3+ hours south along the coast, followed by our *pousada* a further 30+ minutes south. Picinguaba proved to be a good find - comfortable rooms, good food and fantastic views of the nearby beaches, coastline and Mata Atlântica forest rising up the coastal ranges. As a bonus the gardens and pool area contained a range of hummingbirds and tanagers, including additions such as Red-necked Tanager, Green-headed Tanager, Golden-chevroned Tanager, Saw-billed Hermit and Rufous-bellied Thrush.



Scenes around Paraty

Although there is the possibility of trips to birding properties elsewhere in the neighbourhood, the real reasons for visiting Picinguaba are the ocean, islands and the beaches, which are spectacular. We spent a whole day, under glorious blue skies, travelling on a wooden schooner from island-to-island and beach-to-beach. Perfect.



Black Jacobin; Glittering-throated Emerald



Unspec. butterfly; Rufous-collared Sparrow



Brazilian Tanager; Green-headed Tanager; Red-necked Tanager



Rufous-bellied Thrush; Golden-chevroned Tanager



Sailing from Picinguaba

Back in Rio we also had a pretty spectacular place to stay - the guest room of Willie and Mandy's beach-front Ipanema apartment. From this base we ate Brazilian meat at the Garota de Ipanema (famous venue where the "Girl from Ipanema" was written) and bikini shopped in the classy Ipanema and Leblon district. An enjoyable end to our Brazilian Thanksgiving weekend!



Ipanema shopping; Poolside at Picinguaba

Bird List: Brazilian Mata Atlântica¹

(Confirmed personal sightings only – excludes birds heard only; In order of appearance on the plates of de la Pena and Rumboll's Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica)

First location where species seen: GA = Guapi Assu; P = Picinguaba; R=Rio de Janeiro

Neotropic (Olivaceous) Cormorant (R)
Magnificent Frigatebird (R)
Snowy Egret (R)
Cattle Egret (GA)
Striated Heron (GA)
Black-crowned Night-Heron (GA)
White-faced Whistling-Duck (Tree-Duck) (GA)
Brazilian Duck (GA)
Masked Duck (GA) *

Black Vulture (R) *
Savanna Hawk (GA)
Crested Caracara (R)
Yellow-headed Caracara (GA)

Purple Gallinule (GA)
Common Moorhen (Gallinule) (GA)
Southern Lapwing (GA)
Wattled Jacana (GA)

Picazuro Pigeon (GA)
Ruddy Ground-Dove (R)

Orange-winged Parrot (GA)

Smooth-billed Ani (GA)
Guira Cuckoo (GA)

Pauraque (GA)
White-collared Swift (GA)

Reddish Hermit (GA)
Saw-billed Hermit (P)
Swallow-tailed Hummingbird (GA) *
Black Jacobin (GA) *
Violet-capped Woodnymph (GA) *
Glittering-throated Emerald (P) *

Ringed Kingfisher (GA)
Green Kingfisher (P)
Rufous-tailed Jacamar (GA) *
White Woodpecker (GA)
Field (Campo) Flicker (GA)
Lesser Woodcreeper (GA)

Rufous Hornero (GA) *
Wing(Tail)-banded Hornero (GA) *
Yellow-chinned Spinetail (GA)
Rufous-fronted Thornbird (GA)
Chestnut-backed Antshrike (GA)

Yellow-bellied Elaenia (P) *
Common Tody-Flycatcher (GA)
Gray-headed (Yellow-lored) Tody-Flycatcher (GA) *
Masked Water-Tyrant (GA) *
White-headed Marsh Tyrant (GA) *
Yellow-browed Tyrant (GA)
Dusky-capped Flycatcher (GA)
Great Kiskadee (GA)
Social Flycatcher (GA)
Streaked Flycatcher (GA) *
Fork-tailed Flycatcher (GA) *
White-winged Becard (GA) *
Crested Becard (P) *

Swallow-tailed (Blue) Manakin (GA)

White-rumped Swallow (GA)
Brown-chested Martin (P)
Blue-and-white Swallow (P)
Southern Rough-winged Swallow (GA) *

Long-billed Wren (GA) *
House Wren (GA)
Rufous-bellied Thrush (P) *
Chalk-browed Mockingbird (GA)

Masked Yellowthroat (P)
Bananaquit (GA)
Golden-chevroned Tanager (P) *
Chestnut-vented Conebill (GA) *
Green-headed Tanager (P) *
Red-necked Tanager (P) *
Burnished-buff Tanager (GA) *
Blue Dacnis (GA) *
Sayaca Tanager (P)
Palm Tanager (GA)
Brazilian Tanager (GA) *
White-lined Tanager (P)
Swallow Tanager (GA)
Green-winged Saltator (GA)

Double-collared Seedeater (GA) *
Blue-black Grassquit (GA)
Saffron Finch (GA)
Rufous-collared Sparrow (P) *
Shiny Cowbird (P) *
Crested Oropendola (P)
Red-rumped Cacique (P)
Chopi Blackbird (GA)
Chestnut-capped Blackbird (GA) *
House Sparrow (P)

¹ First sighting ever for DJS; * = photo available from trip

Total 87 confirmed species for trip, of which 34 new for me...