

Brazil: 26 March-6 April 2008

I travelled to visit my PhD student Bruna Bezerra who is studying vocal communication in golden-backed uacari monkeys, *Cacajao melanocephalus*. Bruna's partner Lewis Halsey also took part in this trip.

The best bird book was Restall *et al.*'s *Birds of Northern South America* (2006), though covering almost a quarter of the world's species in all plumages, it could be overwhelming at times. The illustrations and identification pointers were great however. Brazil still lacks a decent field guide specific to the country – Souza's *All the Birds of Brazil* (2006) covers a wide range of species, but doesn't show a wide range of plumages, and has many illustrations that are of poor quality. Pearson & Beletsky's *Travellers' Wildlife Guide – Brazil. Amazon and Pantanal* (2005) was a useful introduction to many of the widespread animals and plants.

I took my Canon 1D Mark IIN digital SLR with 17-40mm, 100mm macro and 100-400mm zoom lenses. I also took my Canon Powershot S5 for snapshots. This proved to be a useful combination of gear, and I'm glad that I left my 500mm lens at home because there was little opportunity to use it.

Bruna works in the Jaú National Park, which begins about 200 km NW of Manaus in Amazonia. This is the largest national park in the country (2,272,000 ha), and the second largest area of protected rainforest in the world. The map below is from the World Heritage Nomination/IUCN Technical Evaluation for the site. The River Jaú is the world's best example of a blackwater river ecosystem. The margins of the forest flood seasonally to form igapó forest, and this is the habitat that the monkeys inhabit in the wet season.



Map 1: Location and Site Map – Jaú National Park

I departed around 12.30h on 26 March for Heathrow, flew to Madrid and then Sao Paulo with Iberia, then to Manaus with TAM, arriving early afternoon on 27th. I spent the afternoon and evening of 27th at the Amazon EcoPark Jungle Lodge near Manaus (<http://www.amazonecopark.com.br>). There is a rehabilitation centre for primates confiscated by IBAMA here. Monkeys include red uacari, woolly monkeys and a wild squirrel monkey that likes to live in an enclosure. I also saw a tarantula, *Heliconius* butterflies, and sulphur butterflies. A rehabilitated scarlet macaw lives at the lodge.

Up at 04.30h on 28th to travel to Jaú. We took a bus to Novo Airao to see the botos (river dolphins) tamed by a local. You can stroke them with your feet, and even swim with them. Bruna and Lewis went to buy some eggs, and the bus drove off leaving me on it. We were at the last place with mobile phone reception, so I forced my way into the driver's compartment and gesticulated wildly. A lady managed to explain to him what was happening, and he didn't want to stop. After some persuasion he did, and we were reunited. From Novo Airao we had what should have been a 3h speedboat ride to the IBAMA floating base where the River Jaú meets the Rio Negro. The trip took 4.5 hours because we hit a storm and almost capsized a couple of times. At the IBAMA base we enjoyed a bean stew and some acai 'wine' made from freshly crushed acai berries, apparently a food with the highest concentration of anti-oxidants known.

After a night on the IBAMA base watching bats and nighthawks, we travelled upriver for 4h on 29th in a motorised boat belonging to our host Eduardo. We arrived at Eduardo and Maria's in the early afternoon after a brief stop at a research base at Tiacara. Our hammocks went up in the house, where a neighbour called Roberto was also staying while his wife was in hospital before giving birth. Eduardo and Maria's children Emily and Michel also live there. We drank water filtered and boiled from the river and watched the family catch and eat agouti and turtle. There was an outside toilet in which and massive (but apparently harmless) whip scorpion lived. In total we saw at least 10 river dolphins on our boat trips. We made our first canoe trips into the igapó and found a troop of golden-backed uacaris.

On 30th we visited the tallest tree in Jaú – a samauma. Emballonurid bats lived among the buttress roots, and we saw a squirrel monkey in the nearby canopy. Rain and strong winds set in for the rest of the day and we were housebound. In the evening we watched some bats leave a roost tree in the river close to the house, and caught a vampire bat at the chicken shed. Eduardo wanted it removed because a bat was feeding on his children. We obliged, but caught 3 more the next night and thought the strategy was worthless.

We spent most of 31st March in the igapó, and had good views of the uacaris. We also saw a brown-throated three-toed sloth *Bradypus variegatus*. We missed the giant river otters that Bruna sees here regularly. In the evening we caught some bats leaving the tree roost near the house – although they looked big and I hoped they were fish-eating greater bulldog bats, they turned out to be the largely insectivorous lesser bulldog bats *Noctilio albiventris*. The tree must contain around 50 bats.

On 1st April Eduardo ferried us to Tiacara and we travelled aboard a largish boat with some NGO conservationists. We moored the boat overnight and arrived in Manaus around 10.00h on 2nd. We spent 2-4 April at the Ecolodge. I saw some Brazilian

morpho butterflies here, and a yellow-footed tortoise lives in a pen with some turtles. A group of *Rhynconycteris naso* bats flew from under a branch near the Ecolodge. On 4 April we visited Adrian Barnett at INPA in Manaus, where wild red-rumped agouti feed around the zoological collection that includes Amazon specialities such as manatees, giant river otters and spider monkeys. I travelled back on 5th April, had a 6h delay at Madrid because of a snow flurry at Heathrow.

Bird list

Muscovy duck. - several on the Rio Negro and Jaú River.

Spix's guan – 1 at Manaus Ecolodge.

Neotropic cormorant – several on the Rio Negro and Jaú River.

Cocoi heron - 3, Rio Negro.

Snowy egret – 1, Rio Negro.

Great egret - several on the Rio Negro and Jaú River.

Cattle egret – several between Manaus and Novo Airao with cattle.

Green ibis – 2 at Manaus Ecolodge.

Black vulture – common.

Turkey vulture - occasional – seen in Jaú for sure.

Greater yellow-headed vulture – fairly common.

Hook-billed kite - Rio Negro and Jaú River.

Plumbeous kite - Rio Negro and Jaú River.

Great black hawk -1, Rio Negro.

Black-and-white hawk eagle - 1, Rio Negro.

Bat falcon – 1 Tiacara.

Wattled jacana – 1 near Manaus.

Southern lapwing – 3 between Manaus and Novo Airao.

Solitary sandpiper - 2, Eduardo's, Jaú, 1 Ecolodge, Manaus.

Large-billed tern - ca. 5, Rio Negro.

Ruddy pigeon - Near Manaus.

Plumbeous pigeon - Near Manaus.

White-tipped dove - 2, Ecolodge, Manaus.

Ruddy ground dove - between Manaus and Novo Airao.

Feral pigeon.

Blue and yellow macaw - Flocks of up to 10 seen over River Jaú.

Brown-throated parakeet - Several.

Festive Amazon. Several - River Jaú.

Orange-winged Amazon - The most widespread parrot – often seen in pairs.

Smooth-billed ani - Several.

Greater ani - one Ecolodge, Manaus.

Blackish nightjar - Probably the species hunting around IBAMA base.

Short-tailed swift - Several.

Blue-tailed emerald – the only hummer seen. Eduardo's, Jaú.

Amazonian white-tailed trogon - 1, Ecolodge, Manaus.

Ringed kingfisher - Widespread.

Amazon kingfisher - Rio Negro and Jaú River.

Spotted puffbird – 1, Jaú.

Swallow-winged puffbird – Common.

Black nunbird – 2+ Ecolodge, Manaus.

Black-fronted nunbird - 1, Jaú.

Cuvier's toucan – 4 Ecolodge, Manaus.
Lineated woodpecker – 2 Rio Negro and Jaú River.
Striped woodcreeper – 2, Jaú.
Cinnamon Attila – 1, Jaú.
Great kiskadee – common.
Piratic flycatcher - Ecolodge, Manaus.
Rusty-margined flycatcher - Ecolodge, Manaus.
Tropical kingbird.
Eastern kingbird – several along the road, between Manaus and Novo Airao.
Manakin sp – 1 female, Jaú.
Red-eyed vireo – 1, Ecolodge, Manaus.
White-winged swallow – common over rivers.
Southern rough-winged swallow.
Grey-breasted martin.
Purple martin. Rio Negro.
Barn swallow. Common.
Buff-breasted wren – 1, Ecolodge, Manaus.
Black-billed thrush – several around Manaus.
Blue-grey tanager - Ecolodge, Manaus.
Palm tanager – widespread.
Silver-beaked tanager. Widespread.
Yellow-browed sparrow – 2, Manaus dock.
Saffron finch – common, Manaus dock.
Chestnut-bellied seed finch - Ecolodge, Manaus and Jaú.
Red-capped cardinal - Manaus dock and Ecolodge, Manaus.
Yellow-rumped cacique – widespread.
Yellow-hooded blackbird – near Manaus.
Shiny cowbird – Manaus dock.