

Venezuela, probably around 4 months in 3 trips.

Henri Pittier

I visited two parts of this National Park. I visited the slope near the coast on a guided tour. It was as bad as most guided tours. The only wildlife of interest was a young *Bothrops* in the path which the guide wanted to kill. All the monkeys had been hunted out of this section.

At Rancho Grande it's much better. **Red Howlers** and **Red-tailed Squirrels** are easy to find and **Weeper Capuchins** are sometimes seen. Most mornings I would see a **Red-rumped Agouti** or two. I had one productive night hike in which I saw a **Dusky Mouse Possum** and a **Three-toed Sloth**. I was hiking with a local university student who spent a lot of time there, but he had not seen either of these animals before. On a hike up to the top of the mountain I found the remains of a **porcupine**.

I returned to Rancho Grande in December 2006 and was turned away because it was closed. I returned in January and was allowed to stay in the building, but was not allowed to walk the paths. There is a new rule that requires you to walk with a guide and register 15 days in advance. However, I never saw the Park Ranger get more than 15 ft from his TV, so I went anyways. The only mammals I saw were **Red Howler Monkeys**. I also tried walking the roads, but as it was the weekend and the roads are narrow, it was a bit dangerous. The fact that most of the drivers were drunk didn't help either. I did see one **Red-tailed Squirrel** and found a road kill **Three-toed Sloth**. I did find two colonies of **bats** in the building. One in the fan duct of the old kitchen and one in the little side room next to the stairs that go to the roof. I have not ID'd them yet, but I think they are the same species.

On the road from Valencia to Merida I saw a **Grison** at night.

Los Llanos

From Merida I traveled south to the llanos with Arassari Trek. Alan Highton was the guide. This company gave me my best experience ever with guided wildlife watching. On the last leg of the drive down we saw a **Common Fox** crossing the road. The next morning we went for a drive farther south. We saw **Red Howler Monkeys, Capybara, Giant River Otters, and White-tailed Deer**. In the afternoon we took a boat up the Rio Paguay to camp at a farm. In the morning on the way back we saw **Pink River Dolphins, Red Howlers, and Long-haired Spider Monkeys**, which are quite a rare sight here.

On the way back to Merida there is one night at a river camp. It's nice and cool there after the hot llanos. The only mammal I saw here was the remains of a **River Otter**. I was told that **Kinkajous** are common and **Porcupines** are seen sometimes as well. There is good cloud forest near by that still has **Spectacled Bears**. I am told it is damn near impossible to see one though.

Upon returning to Merida I decided I hadn't seen enough so I caught the next trip back and stayed at the Llanos camp for a couple weeks. In this time I learned a lot more about the wildlife and was able to see a good variety. **Pink Dolphins, Capybara, and Red Howler Monkeys** were seen on 100% of the trips while I was there. **Common**

Opossums were sited on a bout 50% of night cruises. Weeper Capuchins are seen 50% of trips as well. **Giant River Otters** are seen on about 50% of the morning drives and seemed dependant on how early the drive was. The earlier the better. I did not see any from a boat. I had a poor view of a large cat on a tree that was overhanging the river. Two nights later I had a great view of an **Ocelot** at short range. After seeing the **Ocelot** for size comparison, I am sure the first cat was a **Jaguar**. The **Jaguar** is a rare sight here, but **Ocelots** and **Jaguarundis** are seen every now and then. I saw both the **SA Tamandua** and **Giant Anteater** as road kill, but did not see either alive. I did miss a **Giant Anteater** on a morning drive. I was in the second of two vehicles, and the first saw it briefly crossing. I was there in December, and I hear that they are more common a little bit later in the dry season.

I returned to San Vincente twice in January of 2007. I saw **Giant Anteaters** on both trips, as well as **Capybara, Red Howler Monkeys, White-tailed Deer, and Pink River Dolphins**. I also saw 3 **Giant River Otters** on one trip and a group of **Weeper Capuchins** on the other. There is a colony of bats in the Arassari house that I never identified. **Lesser Bulldog Bats** are common over the river at night.

I saw **Common Opossum, Striped Hog-nosed Skunk, Crab-eating Raccoon, and Southern Tamandua** as road kill.

Catatumbo

I visited the Lake Maracaibo Basin in January of 2007. I didn't spend much time there, but I did see the **Tucuxi**, which were pretty easy to find. I also saw **Red Howler Monkeys, Brown Pale-fronted Capuchins, Common Opossums, and a Kinkajou**. **Greater Bulldog Bats** were common over the river. There was also a few bats living in the wall of the house we stayed in on the lake.

Upper Orinoco Region

I traveled to the take off town, Puerto Ayacucho, but prices for trips were too expensive for the expected amount of wildlife. They typically wanted about \$75-\$100 per day. There was also the problem of virtually no other tourists to go on the trip, which would have further raised the price. The man I considered the most reliable said that you might see **monkeys** and **dolphins** and that was it. I did find some fishermen that would take me if I bought all the food, but they were going into Colombia to hunt turtles in a national park. I decided to pass. If I had made arrangements earlier, I'm sure I could have found a good trip into the region. A permit is needed to travel very far because of the Yanamamo.

Cueva de los Guacheros

I went there to see the oilbirds but soon learned there were a few mammals to be seen. **Heteromys anomalus** is common in the cave as are the recently introduced **Black Rat**.

According to the guides only one species of bat lives in the cave, **Artibeus litoralis**, but none could tell me where it roosted. I did see them exit, about 40 minutes before the oilbirds. They fly right above the creek coming out of the cave. After the tour my guide told me that Skunks had been seen every day for the last two weeks, so I decided to return in a couple days. I didn't see any on the way in, but on the way out there were two very approachable **Striped Hog-nosed Skunks** feeding in the cave. However they were in the part of the cave where flash photography is not allowed. **Ocelots** and **Common Opossums** are sometimes seen in the cave.

