

## Brazilian Pantanal and Emas National Park

16<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012

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### Intro

A two week mammal watching tour of the Southern and Northern Pantanal Wetlands with four days spent in the

Cerrado Woodland habitat of Emas National Park. This was a second trip to Brazil for me, Steve Morgan and Mark Bibby hoping to connect with some of the species we'd missed previously. We also had the chance of spending three days with an Armadillo research project with a possibility of the rarely-sighted Giant Armadillo.

This first nine days were arranged with Regina Ribeiro (email [guiaregis@yahoo.com.br](mailto:guiaregis@yahoo.com.br)) who worked incredibly hard for us and was a delight to travel with. The last few days of the trip were arranged directly with Eduardo (email [rejaguar@bol.com.br](mailto:rejaguar@bol.com.br)) at Jaguar Ecological Reserve in the Northern Pantanal.

### Itinerary

San Francisco Lodge – 2 Nights

Baia Das Pedras - 3 Nights

Emas National Park – 4 Nights

Jaguar Ecological Reserve – (Transpantaneira) -3 nights

### Southern Pantanal

#### San Francisco Farm

This lodge is situated 230km from Campo Grande near the Miranda River and can be reached in under 3 hours on a good tarmac road. Spotlighting here is conducted in the lodges' open-back truck in lightly-wooded grassland habitat, rice-fields and many drainage channels. The area is known for its high density of Ocelots, which are easily seen, we saw

nine in three shortish spotlighting sessions. Also the areas close to the lodge are very good for Giant Anteater.

### Species Seen at San Francisco Ranch

Capybara	Black-Striped Capuchin
Yellow Armadillo	Giant Anteater
Crab-Eating Fox	Jaguar
Marsh Deer	Crab-Eating Raccoon
Ocelot	Brazilian Rabbit

### Baia Das Pedras

From San Francisco Farm it took most of the day on a fairly rough road to reach BDP but it was through nice scenery especially after crossing the Rio Negro and en-route we encountered Coatis, Pampas Deer, Azara's Agouti and a possible Puma seen by Mark only. BDP is a large cattle ranch doubling as a wildlife lodge with five comfortable guest rooms



and serves great food in a nice setting. It's also the base for Brazil's only long-term Giant Armadillo research project run by Dr Arnaud Desbiez and supported by Danilo the vet and Gabriel the biologist. We were made very welcome by the guys here and after a presentation and slide-show on the

projects progress we were off for our first nights attempt to see a Giant Armadillo. They have two radio tagged animals in the research area but they are in difficult terrain of quite dense forest and we learned that they don't get to see these animals very often and our only real chance was if one choose to leave the forest and emerge onto one of the tracks around the edge where we could see it in the open. Also the animals don't leave their burrows every night so we weren't overly confident of a sighting and drew a blank on the first night. Whilst spotlighting en-route to the Armadillo area we found a Southern Tamandua with a baby on its back.

Night two, on arrival at the Armadillo territory the guys signal indicated that the animal was out of its burrow and moving, although well into the forest. We were on foot on a sandy track and following the signal until eventually we could hear the sound of the Armadillo moving noisily through the forest but frustratingly out of sight. When she was right near the edge of the forest we heard some heavy thudding sounds as she was breaking into a termite mound. All noise then stopped completely for about ten minutes and we feared she'd gone into a burrow. However the rustling started again and getting louder we could finally see this animal moving through the undergrowth and heading in our direction. We all held our breath as she emerged onto the track right in front of us for a fantastic sighting which lasted maybe about twenty seconds before she disappeared again. After a few minutes Danilo followed into the forest but she had retired into a burrow close to the forest edge which gave us high hopes for a further sighting the following evening.

As a bonus for us here they also had a tagged Southern Naked-Tailed Armadillo which their research has shown to be active by day-time although they only emerge above ground for a few minutes, a couple of times a day. So we had the chance to sit near a burrow during the day in the hope of the animal emerging. In three attempts of sitting out in the hot sun for a few hours we were rewarded with two brief sightings.

On the third night back at the Giant Armadillo spot we all sat waiting quietly for about four and a half hours but she never emerged and so we had to be happy with the previous evenings sighting.

A big Thank you to Arnaud and his team at Baia Das Pedras, we really appreciate their efforts to get us this amazing sighting. Contact for anyone else wanting to try to see Giant Armadillo here is [adesbiez@hotmail.com](mailto:adesbiez@hotmail.com)

#### Species seen at Baia Das Pedras

Giant Armadillo	Coati
Southern Naked-Tailed Armadillo	Southern Tamandua
Yellow Armadillo	Crab-Eating Fox
Pampas Deer	Crab-Eating Raccoon
Marsh Deer	White-Lipped Peccary
Azara's Agouti	Capybara

Tapir and Pumas are also sighted quite regularly here

## Emas National Park

It's a rough six hour drive from BDP back to Campo Grande where we collected our hire car (Ford Ranger pick-up truck) and had a lunch stop before the 380km drive up to Emas. We spent the first night here in the town of Chapadao Do Ceu in the convenient Hotel Victor which provided us a decent breakfast during which we met up with Edmar our local guide for the next three days at Emas. His connections with the park staff certainly smoothed the way for us to stay late in the park and visit a few restricted areas. First we transferred to the Fazenda Santo Antonio for a three night stay. This was the perfect place to stay, quite close to Emas park entrance, situated in nice habitat, very comfortable and with great food provided by Josie our cook. Contact details for the owner Margie are [emppeixoto@uol.com.br](mailto:emppeixoto@uol.com.br)

In 2010 Emas suffered a huge fire which affected 90% of the park, resulting in many animals being lost or fleeing the area. Emas is effectively an island habitat surrounded by crop fields, mainly sugar beet and soya plantations. Large mammal numbers have suffered, especially Giant Anteater and Maned Wolf but it's still a good place for some of the smaller stuff and we learned that Greater Grison, Striped Hog-Nosed Skunk and Three Banded Armadillo had all been sighted recently near the rangers' station. Plus there were possibilities for Hoary Fox and Pampas Cat.

Our first day in the park proved to be fairly quiet until we were returning to the Fazenda for dinner around 7pm when Mark spotted three Pumas sitting out in the open, close to the road. We got out of the truck for a better look and one at a time the Pumas crossed the road in front of us and disappeared not to be seen again. Spotlighting that night got off to a quick start with a Crab-Eating Fox followed a minute or so later by a Maned Wolf and then a



Brazilian Tapir out in the open, recently cropped beet field. Tapirs were subsequently seen every night in these open fields. We also got the eye shine of an Opposum in a tree well off the road but it climbed down and disappeared when we tried to approach on foot.

Spotlighting is not officially allowed inside the park but there were very few visitors here (we only saw one other vehicle during our three days) and we obtained permission to stay inside til 9pm and then could spotlight the perimeter road which proved quite productive.

### Species seen at Emas

Yellow Armadillo

Pampas Deer

Crab-Eating Fox

Puma

Maned Wolf

Striped Hog-Nosed Skunk

Tapir

### Northern Pantanal

After returning the vehicle to Campo Grande we caught a flight up to Cuiaba where we had to say farewell and a big Thank You to Regina. We were met just after 7pm by Eduardo and after a dinner stop in the lively town of Pocone we started the four hour drive along the Transpantaneira down to Jaguar Ecological Reserve. Somewhere around midnight just before reaching the lodge a Jaguar crossed the road in front of us. The next morning we headed south towards Porto Jofre and en-route we found a small group of Pantanal (Black-Tailed)



Marmosets. From Porto Jofre we spent a long, hot day on the river and finally spotted a Jaguar right at the end of the day just ten minutes before reaching the dock. Small groups of Giant River Otters were frequently seen through the day. On the morning of our last full day we took a walk along Santa Isabel road and in the afternoon drove down to Campo Jofre but the day was intensely hot and fairly quiet on the mammal front. After dark heading back towards the lodge we encountered a Fer-De-Lance snake out on the road and then another Jaguar close to the bridge near the lodge.



Our last spotlighting evening found us a couple of Tapirs and our best view yet of a Jaguar. Eduardo picked up the eye-shine of a small cat in the undergrowth right beside the road. We reversed back and on getting the cat in the binoculars I called it as a Margay. It was a smallish, spotted cat with quite delicate facial features. Eduardo also said it was a Margay but the sighting was very brief and

unfortunately the other guys didn't see it very well so even though I'm convinced it was a Margay the sighting was not very satisfactory.

Back to the lodge for a few hours' sleep and a 4am departure back to Cuiaba for our flight home and the end of a very successful and enjoyable trip.

#### Species seen in Northern Pantanal

Jaguar

Pantanal Marmoset

Capybara

Black Howler

Azara's Agouti

Red Brocket

Giant River Otter

Margay

Tapir

We also managed to identify the following bats during the trip:

Common Long-Tongued Bat

Seba's Short-Tailed Fruit Bat

Doglike Sac-winged Bat