

Mammalwatching Report: Wild Chaco Expeditions Paraguay 2024



Location: Humid and Dry Chaco, Ybycuí National Park + short visit to Iguazu Falls

Date: 11-29 September 2024

Guest: [Kat Smith](#)

Guided and organized by [Andrey Giljov and Karina Karenina](#)

Armed with binoculars, cameras, a thermal imager and a knack for finding the humor in anything (including weather!) we embarked on the mammal-oriented trip. The itinerary was designed to combine the camping in the most wildlife-rich areas and truly Paraguayan indoors. The other thing was to use the best practices for mammal watching (hiding near waterholes, using camera traps, spotlighting remote roads etc.) in this still little known destination. To see howler monkeys, a boat trip was organized to the private reserve on the Manduvira River. As the grand finale of the tour Kat visited both sides of Iguazu Falls.

In total, 31 mammal species were seen, including both anteaters, a daytime puma, a tayra and ten different (!) tapirs.

Photos by Kat Smith and Andrey Giljov

Jardín Botánico, Asunción, Parador Pirahu

Heading towards the central Chaco we made a short stop at the Botanical Gardens of Asunción to look for the local population of **Azara's capuchin monkey**. Two males were found attracted by fruiting trees close to the native forest patch in the Gardens.

Azara's Capuchin



We also stopped at the Parador Pirahu to see the diminutive serotines roosting in dozens under the highway bridge.



Diminutive Serotines

Laguna Bombacha Reserve

This rather small private reserve retains bodies of water year-round, each time providing pleasant wildlife encounters and all to yourselves. This visit, the reserve offered a superb daytime and prolonged sighting of two **lowland tapirs** as well as a glimpse of a **collared peccary**. At night we met **Chacoan maras**, another **tapir**, **greater capybara**, a **crab-eating fox** and a **grey brocket deer** female. A notable bird to mention here was a quebracho crested tinamou walking near the campground.



Lowland Tapirs



Greater Capybara



Laguna Bombacha



Crab-eating fox

Estancia Iparoma

Nestled between two preserved patches of forest in an ocean of farms, the estancia serves as a green corridor for the animals of the area. Despite an evening tropical downpour that immediately flooded sandy roads, we managed to see a local family of **Azara's night monkeys**, as well as a **lesser hairy armadillo** and several **southern three-banded armadillos** during night drive. Morning walk yielded **Chacoan maras** with babies and basking **lowland yellow-toothed cavy**.



Lowland Yellow-toothed
Cavy

Chaco Lodge

The private reserve is located in a transitional zone between the dry Chaco and the Pantanal. The place is famous for flamingos that come here to the ephemeral lagoons. This time the lagoons were dry, but the main aim was to see mammals in the well-preserved forest. As usual, Chaco Lodge didn't disappoint - we got almost all our targets, with most of them in daylight! We saw a **giant anteater** poking around for termites, lots of **southern three-banded armadillos** with three individuals foraging together, drinking **tayra**, **six-banded armadillo**, and a family of **collared peccaries**. A **tapir** approached us two meters away while we were sitting by the waterhole! On the night drive we encountered a **crab-eating raccoon**, **car-eating fox** and **common tapeti** rabbits. A camera trap we put at another waterhole filmed a lovely interacting group of white-lipped peccaries, ocelot in the middle of the day and tayra.



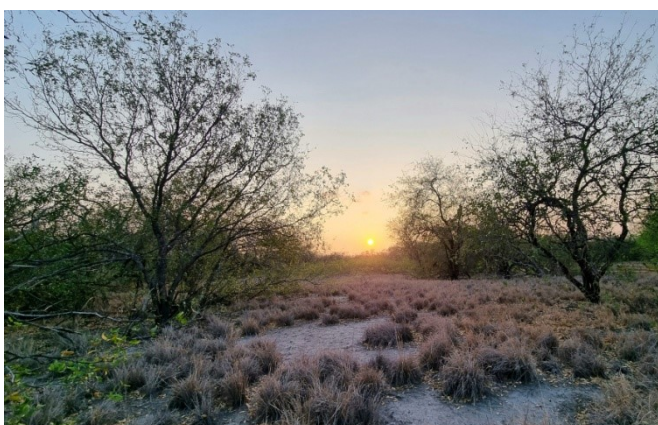
Giant Anteater



Tayra



Southern Three-banded Armadillo



Natural grasslands



Six-banded armadillo

Fortín Toledo area

This well-known site in central Chaco combines open areas with forested private lands, including the reserve near the CCCI (Centro de Conservación e Investigación de vida silvestre). Besides the endemic Chaco birds, the short walk in the reserve revealed several **Chacoan maras** and **lowland yellow-toothed caviés**. After dark, while driving with a thermal camera, we found a male **tapir** feeding in the bush, more **tapetis**, **caviés** and **maras** in the grass, as well as a **pampas fox**. A shy **Geoffroy's cat** crossed the road, watched by a barn owl perched on a fence post. A **lesser hairy armadillo** showed up nicely later that night.



Chacoan Mara



Lesser Hairy Armadillo

Parque Nacional Teniente Agripino Enciso

Despite the remarkably hot weather, the park's waterhole held water. Indeed, it attracted a variety of local wildlife, from birds (including a king vulture!) to mammals. On our way to the water, a ginger shadow darted in front of us - a **puma**! Looking over her shoulder, the cat disappeared into the thorny bushes. Later, while waiting at the waterhole, Kat noticed a movement behind her back - a puma was standing on a hill looking at us, thin branches hiding us but not allowing the camera to focus - but the sighting was long and unforgettable. After the puma had gone, we saw a female tapir and her cub coming close again. It seemed that Kat could touch the female's nose! After dark we visited a colony of **plains viscacha** where we found four active individuals. Later at night Kat saw two more **tapirs** near the ranger station and a **Molina's hog-nosed skunk**.



Lowland Tapir



Puma



Plains Viscacha

Reserva Cañada El Carmen

This remote private reserve is the driest habitat in the area. The hot weather continued and the animals expectedly came to the waterholes. During the night we saw a female **tapir** with a small calf, both species of **foxes** and a **Geoffroy's cat** who, after a quick drink, hid in the bushes possibly being disturbed by one of the foxes. At the daytime we met more drinking maras and several **grey brocket deers**.



Lowland Tapir



Pampas fox

Estancia Iparoma

We spent an evening at the Iparoma waiting for the Molina's hog-nosed skunk to come to one of the waterholes after dark.



Molina's hog-nosed skunk

Montelindo

Here we visited a private estancia where the owner has conserved the Humid Chaco forest and marshes on his property by raising cattle and hay on natural grassland. At the entrance we saw a lonely **collared peccary**. In the afternoon we've got our main target species we had come for, such as **Azara's night monkeys** sleeping in the open, **common vampire** and **woolly false vampire bats**. After dark we saw a **Southern tamandua** and a large cat in the reeds which turned out to be a very shy **ocelot**.



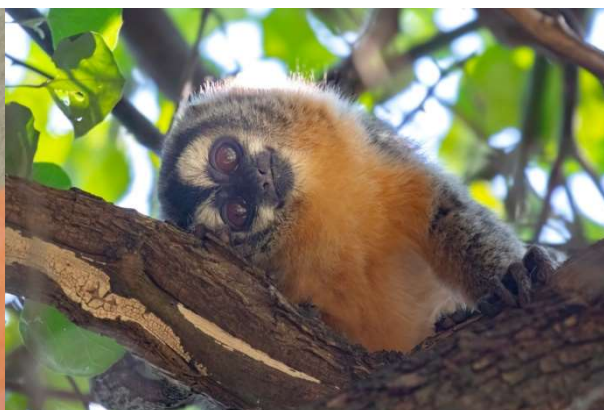
Common Vampire Bat



Collared peccary



Woolly False Vampire Bats



Azara's Night Monkeys

Ybycuí National Park

This fragment of Atlantic Forest is renowned for its birdlife, and we did find such bright stars of the park as the swallow-tailed manakin and the red-ruffed fruitcrow. The mammal targets here are opossums, and with the help of a thermal imager we were able to see a **grey four-eyed opossum** up close.

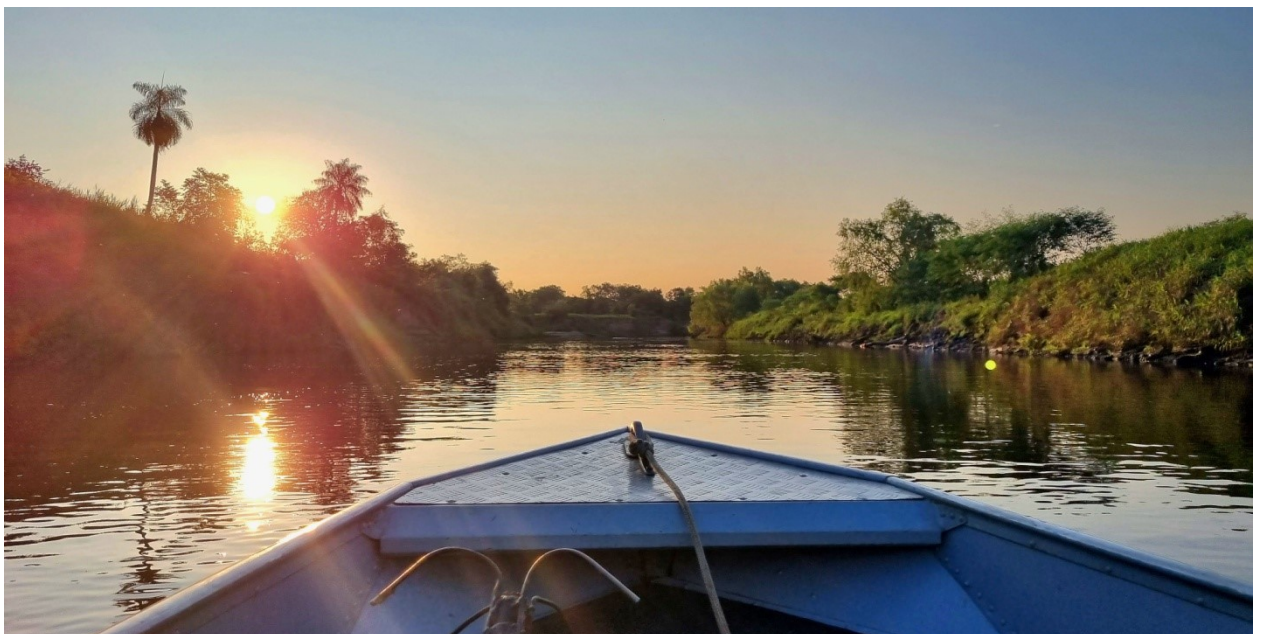


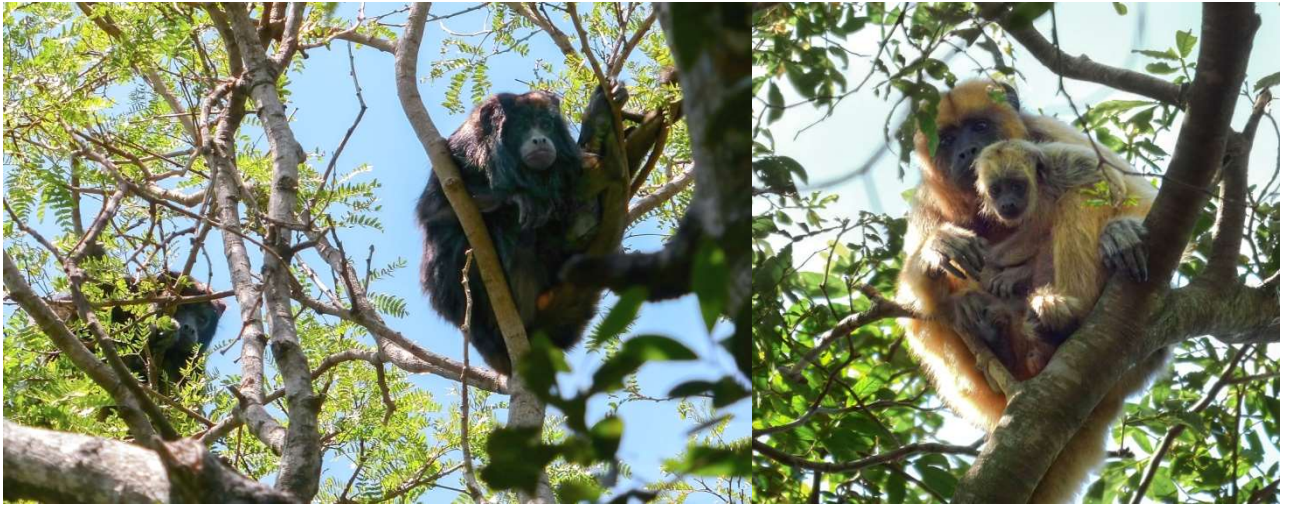
Grey Four-eyed Opossum

Salto Guaraní waterfall

Paraguay River

The main objective of this boat trip was to find **black-and-gold howler monkeys** in the private reserve while enjoying the rich birdlife of Paraguay, Piribebuy and Manduvira rivers (with many Humid Chaco avian specialties). One of the troops was found with prolonged views of a whole family.





Black-and-gold howler monkeys

Iguazu falls

Summoning up the will to distract herself from the majestic waterfalls, Kat found a **South American coati** and **greater capybara** on the Brazil side, while **Azara's agouti** and **black capuchin monkeys** were on the Argentina side.



Greater Capybara



Black capuchin monkeys



South American coati



Azara's agouti

To conclude, it was an amazing trip and it was so great to see the animals at no rush, and so close!

Contact us at zoology.gilev@gmail.com or via [Insta](#) or [FB](#) for individual and group tours.

And some more photos!



Close encounter with an old lady tapir



White-lipped peccary – Camera Trap



Crab-eating raccoon



Common tapeti



Geoffroy's cat



Lesser hairy armadillo



Grey brocket deer

Here are some birds to add more color to the report ☺

