

Bolivia March 2024 – Ben Balmford, Andrew Balmford, Sarah Blakeman

Email: ben.balmford@gmail.com

I had a work trip to Bolivia in early April 2024. As my parents were living in Brazil at the time, we decided to meet up for a ~2 week mammal trip in Bolivia before I started my work trip. This is broadly notes from that mammal trip, but with some extras from the work bit where mammal relevant.

Logistics

Organising things in Bolivia is relatively straightforward, and I think there are aspects you can do by yourselves (e.g. arranging all flights, hotels in towns) to save money. Note that the only flight operator for Rurrenabaque is EcoJet, they only run on some days, and they are NOT findable through aggregation sites (eg Kayak).

We organised trips through Mashaquipe (<https://mashaquipe.com/inicio-english/>, mashaquipe@hotmail.com and particularly responsive on WhatsApp: +591 71986880) for Olallas titi monkey at Monte Carlos and Rio Beni at Aguasal; and Nick's Adventures <https://nicksadventuresbolivia.com/> nicksadventuresbolivia@gmail.com for Madidi NP and Kaa Iya and work bits near Santa Cruz. I'd highly recommend both operators. Indeed, I would sort everything for the Madidi/Rurrenabaque leg through Mashaquipe and then sort Santa Cruz based trips with Nick's Adventures.

Overall plan

La Paz to Rurrenabaque – EcoJet

14/03 evening – meet up in La Paz

15/03-18/03 fly La Paz to Rurrenabaque, then go to Monte Carlos and Aguasal with Mashaquipe

18/03-21/03 – Madidi NP organised through Nick at Berraco Tented Camp

21/03-22/03 – Rurrenabaque

22/03-24/03 – Cochabamba (for census day which is every few years and can't be out and about)

24/03-26/03 – Sucre

26/01-30/03 – fly to Santa Cruz, then Kaa Iya with Nick

Monte Carlos and Aquasal with Mashaquipe

In truth, we organised our trip for the two titi monkeys through Mashaquipe rather than Nick because they were substantially cheaper. Despite this lower price tag, they Mashaquipe were utterly brilliant. They operated with Swiss efficiency, knew the areas and sites really well, and were extremely keen to look after us at all times. Both Nick and Mashaquipe warned us that 3d3n would likely not be sufficient to get both titi monkeys, and so it proved – we dipped on the **Ollalas titi monkey**, only hearing it distantly at Monte Carlos. We did however see **Rio Beni titi** very easily at Aguasal, and could be based out of Mashaquipe's (very nice!) pampas hotel in Santa Rosa call Las Tortugas, about 45mins from the site.

In addition at Monte Carlos/getting there, we saw **southern Amazon red squirrel**, **brown capuchin**, **southern red howler**, **Bolivian squirrel monkey**, and **collared peccary**. At Aguasal, and our base at Mashaquipe, we added **capybara**, **Brazilian tapir**, **crab-eating racoon**, **crab-eating fox**, **tayra**, **Brazilian porcupine**, **brown agouti**, **black and brown howler**, **Bolivian pink**

dolphin, common opossum, proboscis bat, greater fishing bat, and brown-throated three-toed sloth.

Madidi NP

In Madidi we were based at Berraco Tented Camp, which is run by Pedro, and absolutely amazing, buried in the heart of the NP. We'd organised it through Nick, but Mashaquipe knew Pedro well – as they also run a hotel in Madidi but closer to Rurrenabaque. Personally, I regret not having more time in Madidi – specifically, some time at another site, probably Mashaquipe's Madidi NP ecolodge, which was lower down and so gave us better chances of **Madidi titi monkey** which we again dipped on at the higher elevation Berraco camp. Berraco, however, deep in the forest, was an absolutely brilliant place for three nights, again very comfortable, and it felt like anything could turn up any time. Given the level of (very fresh) activity, I think we were actually a bit unlucky to not bump into a **giant armadillo** when wandering around at night, and we also saw tracks of **yapok** and **bush dog**. It really felt like the kind of place you could just stumble upon anything.

We did pick up **tayra** while driving to Berraco, and then, once there, **Brazilian tapir, red brocket deer, capybara, brown capuchin, southern red howler, Bolivian squirrel monkey, Azara's night monkey, Peruvian black spider monkey, greater white-lined bat, and lesser white-lined bat.**

Cochabamba

We'd originally planned to spend census day in Sucre, but in the end a delayed flight out of Rurrenabaque meant we only made it to Cochabamba. This was notable for the absolutely stunning Casa Deco hotel <https://casadecohotel.com/en/english/> and the **highland yellow toothed cavy** which called the empty lot next door home.

Kaa Iya

Out of Santa Cruz, we went with Nick's adventures to Kaa Iya, 5d4n, some of the best mammal-ing I've ever done (comparable to Sangha). Be warned, accommodation is in a rather dilapidated ranger station – not a problem at all, but don't expect luxury. Cezar - one of his guides - has the very best eyes I've ever been out with. We didn't go to jaguar land as there was nothing there we hadn't seen/wasn't better at Kaa Iya. **White eared titi** you can pick up in Santa Cruz – either, as we did, at a forest patch on the industrial estate (where we also saw **Bolivian squirrel monkey** and **brown throated three toed sloth**), or at the botanical gardens (where we did not see it, but again had **brown throated three toed sloth, Amazon red squirrel, capybara, black and brown howler** and **brown capuchin**).

In 5d4n at Kaa Iya – where you just drive up and down a road which follows a pipeline, in quite tall and thick vegetation – great guides combined with brilliant good luck, to deliver some fantastic mammals: **crab-eating fox, pampas fox, tapeti, grey brocket deer, Azara's agouti, jaguar** (several times, including a courting pair), **jaguarundi** (at least twice crossing the road), **puma, ocelot, black-tailed marmoset, pale titi monkey, Chacoan peccary** (one certain sighting, and one very probable, but distant), **white-lipped peccary, and collared peccary**. Plus, there are **Paraguayan punare** in the bottom left falling apart buildings at the rangers station as you look from the main road.

Other sites

San Miguelito Jaguar Conservation Ranch

This is a water buffalo/cattle ranch crossed with a conservation project, run by the very enthusiastic Dusten. In 1n we saw **NID dog faced bats** (if anyone knows what they are, please get in touch, really impressive bat roost/exodus from these cliffs above at nightfall), **tappeti**, **Azara's agouti**, **red howler**, **black and brown howler**, **brown capuchin**, and **red brocket deer**.

Refugio los volcanos in Amboro NP

Possibly the most beautifully situated hotel I've ever been too. Surrounded on all sides by huge bare granite mountains rising from thick rainforest – definitely worth a visit for the scenery, walks and relaxing atmosphere, only saw **brown capuchin** mammal wise, but did pick up *Bothrocophias andianus* (also newly described species is very common but not seen), red billed parrot and Andean condor.

Uyuni and Eduardo Avaroa

Vicuna were very common, and there was a site between there and the lakes in the south for **mountain Vischacha**. Plus cool birds: bairds sandpiper, Andean avocet, Andean goose, Puna miner, Chilean Andean and James' flamingos, lesser rhea, Wilson's phalaphrope

In **La Paz – Colibrì ecolodge** <https://colibricamping.com/> south east of the city has a good population of **Mountain viscacha** in the valley at the bottom of the back garden (easiest to see in the late afternoon)

Mammal list

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| 1. Azara's agouti | 17. crab-eating
raccoon | 34. red howler
monkey |
| 2. Azara's night
monkey | 18. greater fishing bat | 35. Rio Beni titi
monkey |
| 3. black and brown
howler | 19. greater white-
lined bat | 36. tappeti |
| 4. black-tailed
marmoset | 20. grey brocket deer | 37. tayra |
| 5. Bolivian pink
dolphin | 21. highland yellow-
toothed cavy | 38. Vicuna |
| 6. Bolivian squirrel
monkey | 22. jaguar | 39. White-eared titi
monkey |
| 7. Brazilian
porcupine | 23. jaguarundi | 40. white-lipped
peccary |
| 8. Brazilian tapir | 24. lesser white-lined
bat | 41. Southern Amazon
red squirrel |
| 9. brown agouti | 25. mountain
viscacha | 42. (NID dog-faced
bats) |
| 10. brown capuchin | 26. ocelot | |
| 11. brown-throated
three-toed sloth | 27. pale titi monkey | |
| 12. capybara | 28. pampas fox | |
| 13. Chacoan peccary | 29. Paraguayan
punare | |
| 14. collared peccary | 30. Peruvian black
spider monkey | |
| 15. common
opossum | 31. proboscis bat | |
| 16. crab-eating fox | 32. puma | |
| | 33. red brocket deer | |