



BIRDING MATO GROSSO

Customized birding and natural history tours throughout Brazil.

BRAZIL: MARANHÃO

26 – 30 November 2018



Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*), Arari / MA

trip report and photographs by Bradley Davis (bradley@birdingmatogrosso.com)
www.birdingmatogrosso.com

Introduction: Brazil is a massive country. This is a fact not lost on the visiting birder, who, during the course of a first visit to the country, will often soon be convinced of the need to return. Brazil has a bird list exceeding 1900 species, of which nearly 1700 species are resident breeding birds. Of those, 277 species are found nowhere else in the world. It thus stands to reason that most birders would focus on the endemic species, and the areas richest in those species – the Atlantic rainforests of the South-east, the spectacular *caatinga* and remnant forests of the North-east, or the vast Amazon basin, to name just a couple of the most popular regions. The downside of its massive size is that a number of Brazil's birding destinations have not made it onto the trail followed by international visitors; amongst these areas are regions which would be extremely popular if only there weren't so many other great places to go birding!

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

This short report aims to spotlight one such area, the state of Maranhão in north-east Brazil. This was the second consecutive year a Birding Mato Grosso customized tour visited Maranhão, and both of our trips hit the area during the key October – November period, when the amazing crane spectacle at Arari is at its best. This report covers only our time in Maranhão, which was part of a much longer customized tour that covered the southern Amazon near Alta Floresta, followed by a terrific run through the best birding sites in Minas Gerais. The latter section of the trip included a visit to Botumirim to see the demure Blue-eyed Ground-Dove at the new reserve which our guests, active conservationists themselves, had played a key role in helping to protect.

The north-eastern state of Maranhão lies at an avian crossroads between the mouth of the mighty Amazon river to the west, the arid *caatinga* scrublands to the east, with areas of *cerrado* in the south of the state, and extensive (and fairly birdless) babaçu palm forests in the centre of the state. The result is a fascinating mix of habitats; unfortunately, Maranhão is one of Brazil's poorest states and a great deal of the best habitats have been heavily degraded. Our visits to Maranhão focus on the humid rice-growing region of Arari on the east bank of the Mearim river, and the dry forests and *cerrado*-like habitats around the sun-baked city of Caxias. We also spent a morning birding the coastal mudflats and mangroves around the state capital of São Luis, where stunning Scarlet Ibises, a loud Mangrove Rail, and a dapper Rufous Crab-Hawk were amongst the highlights.

While the birding at sites around the city of Caxias in the east part of the state is very productive, with a nice range of endemics and specialties to target (on this trip we saw Kaempfer's Woodpecker, Pectoral Antwren, Hooded Gnateater, an undescribed species of *Myiornis* pygmy-tyrant, Horned Screamer, Pheasant Cuckoo, Bearded Bellbird, Maranhão Hermit, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Lesser Crescent-chested Puffbird, Ochre-cheeked Spinetail, White-naped Jay, Coal-crested Finch, and Blackish-blue Seedeater), the highlight of our trip was once again the spectacle of dozens of cranes and rails of up to ten species that we encountered during our time birding the rice plantations around Arari. During the months of October and November, these plantations are overrun with rails flocking to the area to breed before the rice harvest begins. This year we arrived just in time – the areas we birded on the 26th and 27th of November, seeing ten different species of rallids, were harvested overnight on the 27th and gone by the morning of the 28th! Nevertheless, we were able to get great views of Yellow-breasted Crane, Black Rail, Paint-billed Crane, Ash-throated Crane and Gray-breasted Crane at stakeouts set up by our excellent local guide, Thiago Rodrigues – we even managed to photograph a number of the above-mentioned species. Spotted Rails were abundant on the dikes and farm roads, and we observed many family groups of parents accompanied by chicks of varying sizes. We also had Purple, Common, and better yet, Azure Gallinules in the paddies and natural marshy areas. Arari also holds a number of other specialty birds, and thanks to Thiago's superlative local knowledge, we were able to track down most of these: Black-chested Tyrant, Buff-browed Chachalaca, Least and Stripe-backed Bitterns, Jandaya Parakeet, Spotted Piculet, Ochre-backed Woodpecker, Crested Doradito, and Cocoa and Spectacled Thrushes were some of the best birds.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Itinerary:

November 25th – Arrival in São Luis and transfer to our hotel.

Night at Bristol Express Hotel in São Luis, Maranhão.

November 26th – AM: Birding coastal mudflats and mangroves in São Jose de Ribamar.

PM: Transfer to Arari and late afternoon birding rice plantations.

Night at Agape Hotel in Miranda do Norte, Maranhão.

November 27th – Full day birding the Arari area.

Night at Agape Hotel in Miranda do Norte, Maranhão.

November 28th – AM: Morning birding rice plantations and forest patches near Arari.

PM: Travel to Caxias. Late afternoon birding at Macacos.

Night at Hotel Alecrim in Caxias, Maranhão.

November 29th – Full day birding the Caxias area.

Night at Hotel Alecrim in Caxias, Maranhão.

November 30th – AM: Full day birding the Caxias area.

Night at Hotel Alecrim in Caxias, Maranhão.

December 1st – Travel to Teresina for outbound flights.



Scarlet Ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*), São José de Ribamar / MA

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL



Spotted Rail (*Pardirallus maculatus*), Arari / MA



Paint-billed Crake (*Neocrex erythrops*), Arari / MA



Ash-throated Crake (*Mustelirallus albicollis*), Arari / MA



Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*), Arari / MA

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL



Kaempfer's Woodpecker (*Celeus obrienti*), Caxias / MA



Pheasant Cuckoo (*Dromococcyx phasianellus*), Caxias / MA



Hooded Gnateater (*Conopophaga roberti*), Caxias / MA

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Annotated Checklist:

TINAMOUS

*** Cinereous Tinamou** *Crypturellus cinereus*

Heard only, on the 28th at Sítio Perequetê along the Mearim river in Arari.

SCREAMERS

Horned Screamer *Anhima cornuta*

Five birds seen at a dried-out marsh near Caxias on the 29th. At first they were quite distant, but a pair flew across towards us in response to playback, eventually landing in the top of a palm where we were able to scope them quite nicely.

DUCKS

White-faced Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Seen only on the 28th during the drive from Miranda do Norte to Caxias.

Brazilian Teal *Amazonetta brasiliensis*

A pair seen at Arari on the 26th was our only sighting.

GUANS & ALLIES

Buff-browed Chachalaca *Ortalis superciliaris* **ENDEMIC**

Thiago took us to a spot for this endemic specialty, which appeared on cue in a tiny patch of forest not far from the rice plantations in Arari on the morning of the 27th. The species is restricted to a small area east of the mouth of the Amazon in the Brazilian states of Maranhão and Pará, and just barely over the state border into Piauí.

GREBES

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus*

A pair seen en route to Miranda do Norte from São Luis on the 26th.

CORMORANTS

Neotropical Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

Seen on the 26th in São Luis.

HERONS & EGRETS

Pinnated Bittern *Botaurus pinnatus*

Seen daily in the rice plantations at Arari, with a count of 5 birds on the 27th.

Stripe-backed Bittern *Ixobrychus involucris*

One seen in a reedy patch of natural marsh between two plantations along the road into the paddies near Arari on the 27th.

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*

We completed our sweep of South America's bitterns when Keith spotted one lovely individual in vegetation beside a little pond near Arari on the 27th.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

*** Rufescent Tiger-heron** *Tigrisoma lineatum*

Heard only, on the 29th near Caxias.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Seen daily at Arari.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

Seen on the 26th and 27th, in São Luis and around Arari.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Seen on three dates.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata*

Seen on the 26th, 27th and 28th in the Arari area.

Yellow-crowned Night-heron *Nyctanassa violacea*

At least a half dozen seen in an area of mangroves at São José de Ribamar near São Luis on the morning of the 26th.

IBISES

Scarlet Ibis *Eudocimus ruber*

We saw 18 individuals of this spectacular species on the mudflats and neighbouring mangroves at the Porto do Barbosa in São José de Ribamar on the morning of the 26th.

NEW WORLD VULTURES

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*

Seen on a daily basis.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Seen almost every day of the trip.

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture *Cathartes burrovianus*

Seen regularly in small numbers over the plantations and marshes at Arari.

OSPREY

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One seen en route from São Luis to Arari on the 26th.

HAWKS & EAGLES

*** Gray-headed Kite** *Leptodon cayanensis*

Heard only, on the 29th near Caxias.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*

One seen over Caxias on the 28th turned out to be our only record.

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus*

Seen daily in the Arari area, with a maximum daily count of four birds.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*

Seen near Arari on the 26th and 27th, and a few seen at wetlands as we departed Miranda do Norte on the 28th.

Savanna Hawk *Buteogallus meridionalis*

Two birds seen at Arari along the Estrada de Moitas on the morning of the 28th.

Rufous Crab Hawk *Buteogallus aequinoctialis*

We stopped on the outskirts of São Luis to check an area where the species nests just about every year. It took a while, but Thiago tracked it down for us and we had nice scope views of this lovely raptor of coastal lowlands.

Roadside Hawk *Buteo magnirostris*

Seen on a daily basis.

Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus*

One seen on the 28th was our only record.

FALCONS

Southern Caracara *Caracara plancus*

Seen just about every day.

Yellow-headed Caracara *Milvago chimachima*

Seen on a daily basis.

*** Laughing Falcon** *Herpetotheres cachinnans*

Heard only, on the 28th.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One seen over the marshes near Arari on the 27th.

RAILS & CRAKES

Rufous-sided Crane *Laterallus melanophaius*

One seen briefly at the edge of a dike in the rice plantations at Arari on the 27th.

Gray-breasted Crane *Laterallus exilis*

Singles seen very well on the 26th and the 27th in the rice fields at Arari.

Black Rail *Laterallus jamaicensis*

ENDANGERED

Thiago literally started off our time at Arari with a spectacular sighting of this tiny, ghost-like crane as soon as we arrived on-site on the afternoon of the 26th. The bird performed remarkably well, appearing precisely where Thiago said it would, and showing itself fearlessly, even posing for a few photos (see cover page)! We also heard multiple individuals on both the 26th and 27th, though perhaps no more than 5 birds in total. The population of Black Rail found near the mouth of the Amazon in eastern Pará and in northern Maranhão is quite poorly known (the species account on Cornell's Birds of the World site has no mention of its occurrence in Brazil, for example), but the birds appear to breed in the rice paddies flanking the Mearim river in the Arari area, before migrating to the coastal wetlands of eastern Pará.

Ash-throated Crane *Mustelirallus albicollis*

Seen on both the 26th and 27th in the rice plantations at Arari.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Yellow-breasted Crane *Porzana flaviventer*

A tiny rail with a large range, but given its size, habits and habitats, it is only rarely seen. After failing to find one during our first afternoon at Arari, we managed to connect on the following day and see one well; we heard at least two or three different individuals that same day.

Paint-billed Crane *Neocrex erythrops*

Singles seen on both the 26th and 27th, and we heard a couple of other individuals on the latter date as well. While not as common as some of the other species in the rice plantations, Thiago always seems to have at least one or two spots where he manages to find “see-able” individuals. I believe Keith managed to get some photos of one of these birds on the 27th.

Spotted Rail *Pardirallus maculatus*

Literally dozens seen on each day we spent in the rice plantations at Arari. Easily the showiest of the rallids we saw during the trip, with many birds seen just strolling along the dikes or foraging in irrigation and drainage ditches. We were also privileged to be able to observe several family groups, including pairs with tiny black chicks, and some with larger “teenage” juveniles.

Mangrove Rail *Rallus longirostris*

A very loud individual strutted across a garbage-littered mudflat alongside a mangrove at São José de Ribamar on the morning of the 26th, eager to defend its territory from the unseen interloper it was hearing on Thiago’s tape. Formerly part of Clapper Rail – all Clapper Rails of coastal South America are now split as Mangrove Rail.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*

Loads of them seen in the rice paddies around Arari, easily 50+ birds per day, likely many more!

Azure Gallinule *Porphyrio flavirostris*

Two birds seen in a small patch of natural wetlands between the rice plantations on the 27th was our only sighting of this uncommon bird. Thiago always does his leg work, and usually has at least one or two spots for the birds.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula chloropus*

Seen by some on the 27th.

LIMPKIN

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*

Two birds seen distantly at Sitio Perequetê in Arari on the morning of the 28th. Thiago was telling us that the locals hunt the species in this region, which was probably the first time I had ever heard of the species being hunted by people.

SERIEMAS

* **Red-legged Seriema** *Cariama cristata*

A pair heard duetting near Caxias as we walked into the APA Municipal do Inhamum park on the morning of the 29th.

PLOVERS

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*

Seen on the 26th and 27th.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

One seen at the Porto do Barbosa at São José de Ribamar on the morning of the 26th.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

A count of ten bird at the Porto do Barbosa in São José de Ribamar on the morning of the 26th.

JACANAS

Wattled Jacana *Jacana jacana*

Abundant in the rice plantations at Arari on the 26th, 27th and 28th.

SANDPIPERS

American Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*

A count of 27 of these Nearctic migrants seen in São Luis on the morning of the 26th.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

Seen on the 26th and 27th.

Willet *Tringa semipalmata*

Two seen in São Luis on the morning of the 26th.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Ten birds seen at the Porto do Barbosa on the morning of the 26th.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

A handful (perhaps 5 birds or so) mixed in with the more numerous Semipalmated Sandpipers at the Porto do Barbosa in São José de Ribamar on the morning of the 26th.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

A couple of dozen birds seen on mudflats at the Porto do Barbosa on the morning of the 26th.

GULLS & TERNS

Gray-hooded Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*

Recorded on the morning of the 27th in São Luis.

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*

One bird seen in São Luis on the 27th.

Large-billed Tern *Phaetusa simplex*

Seen on the 27th.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Seen in São Luis on the 27th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Recorded in São Luis on the 27th.

PIGEONS & DOVES

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Picazuro Pigeon *Patagioenas picazuro*

A half dozen birds seen in Caxias on the 30th was our only record.

Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata*

Seen only on the 30th, in an area of disturbed rocky cerrado north-east of Caxias.

**** Plain-breasted Ground-dove** *Columbina minuta*

Seen by Thiago on the 28th.

Ruddy Ground-dove *Columbina talpacoti*

Common in and around Caxias, but also seen on the 27th near Arari.

Scaled Dove *Columbina squammata*

Seen daily.

Common Ground-dove *Columbina passerina*

Seen daily in Arari, and on the 28th in Caxias.

*** Gray-fronted Dove** *Leptotila rufaxilla*

PARROTS & MACAWS

*** Red-bellied Macaw** *Orthopsittaca manilata*

Heard only, at a *Mauritia flexuosa* palm swamp near Caxias on the 29th.

Red-shouldered Macaw *Diopsittaca nobilis*

We saw this little macaw in small numbers around Arari and Caxias, with our best sightings coming on the 27th in and around little forest patches in Arari.

White-eyed Parakeet *Psittacara leucophthalmus*

Recorded on four dates, including 50+ seen on the 27th around the rice plantations at Arari.

Jandaya Parakeet *Aratinga jandaya* **ENDEMIC**

Thiago pulled a rabbit out of his hat at the last minute in Arari, taking us to an overgrown pasture with many scattered *bacaba* palms where we found a pair hanging around a possible nest cavity! We were able to enjoy great scope views of these birds even as a light rain started to fall, a wonderful close to our time at Arari.

Peach-fronted Parakeet *Eupsittula aurea*

Seen on three dates around Caxias, including a count of 32 birds seen in flowering trees near the village of Altos on the 29th.

*** Yellow-chevroned Parakeet** *Brotogeris chiriri*

Heard only, on the 29th near Caxias.

Scaly-headed Parrot *Pionus maximiliani*

A flock of ten birds seen on the morning of the 30th in a ribbon of gallery forest near disturbed cerrado north-east of Caxias.

CUCKOOS

Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana*

A pair seen at the Kaempfer's Woodpecker spot outside Caxias on the 28th.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Guira Cuckoo *Guira guira*

Seen on a couple of dates.

Pheasant Cuckoo *Dromococcyx phasianellus*

Seen on the 29th outside of Caxias. We had amazing views of a bird that flew in and perched beside the track where we were birding, sitting up and singing vigorously for quite some time, allowing us to photograph and film it. A widespread but always elusive, enigmatic cuckoo of the American tropics; the Caxias area tends to be a reliable area for the species.

Greater Ani *Crotophaga major*

Seen on three dates, around São Luis and in the Arari area.

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani*

Recorded on a daily basis throughout the trip.

BARN OWLS

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

One seen near Arari at the end of the afternoon of the 26th.

TYPICAL OWLS

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum*

Seen just once, on the 30th near Caxias.

NIGHTJARS & ALLIES

Band-tailed Nighthawk *Nyctiprogne leucopyga*

A couple of birds seen on the evening of the 26th outside of Arari.

Common Pauraque *Nyctidromus albicollis*

One seen on the main road through the rice plantations of Arari on the evening of the 26th.

SWIFTS

Short-tailed Swift *Chaetura brachyura*

Two birds seen over the small palm swamp we birded at Altos near Caxias on the 29th.

Fork-tailed Palm-swift *Tachornis squamata*

A little flock of about a half dozen birds seen over the palm swamp at Alto near Caxias on the 29th.

HUMMINGBIRDS

Rufous-breasted Hermit *Glaucis hirsutus*

One seen in a scrappy patch of humid forest where we saw Black-chested Tyrant at Santa Inês outside Arari on the morning of the 27th.

Maranhão Hermit *Phaethornis maranhoensis* **ENDEMIC**

Singles seen on the 29th and 30th in the Caxias area, including one visiting a patch of flowers that Thiago knew about and had us stake out (he even brought chairs for the group!). Recent studies have suggested that this may not be a valid taxon, and may in fact refer to Cinnamon-throated Hermit *Phaethornis nattereri*, which is otherwise known from southwestern Brazil and adjacent Bolivia.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

White-tailed Goldenthrout *Polytmus guainumbi*

Seen on the morning of the 27th on the Moitas road outside Arari, where we found a bird visiting flowering bushes in a patch of natural marshland surrounded by rice plantations.

Ruby-topaz Hummingbird *Chrysolampis mosquitus*

Two birds seen at Macacos east of Caxias on the afternoon of the 28th.

Swallow-tailed Hummingbird *Eupetomena macroura*

One seen on the 30th.

Glittering-throated Emerald *Amazilia fimbriata*

Seen on the 29th near Caxias.

TROGONS

* **Blue-crowned Trogon** *Trogon curucui*

Heard only, on three dates, mostly in dry forest around Caxias.

MOTMOTS

* **Amazonian Motmot** *Momotus momota*

Heard on the 29th near Caxias.

KINGFISHERS

Ringed Kingfisher *Megaceryle torquata*

Amazon Kingfisher *Chloroceryle amazona*

Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana*

* **American Pygmy Kingfisher** *Chloroceryle aenea*

PUFFBIRDS

* **Pied Puffbird** *Notharchus tectus*

Heard on the 29th in forest near Caxias.

Caatinga Puffbird *Nystalus maculatus* **ENDEMIC**

A pair seen in dry forest outside of Caxias on the morning of the 30th in an area where we were searching (fruitlessly) for Moustached Woodcreeper. The species resulted from the split of Spot-backed Puffbird into the Caatinga Puffbird which is largely restricted to dry forests and caatinga woodland mostly in north-east Brazil, and the Chaco Puffbird which is found in similar habitat in central-west Brazil and neighbouring Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina.

Lesser Crescent-chested Puffbird *Malacoptila striata minor* **ENDEMIC** **ENDANGERED**

Thiago showed us a pair of these attractive puffbirds in a forest patch a few kilometres west of Caxias, on the 29th. The species is a recent split from the Crescent-chested Puffbird, which is endemic to the coastal Atlantic forests from southern Bahia to Santa Catarina. The Lesser Crescent-chested Puffbird is endemic to a small area of north-eastern Maranhão and neighbouring eastern Piauí states.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Black-fronted Nunbird *Monasa nigrifrons*

Heard on the 27th around Arari, and seen daily in the Caxias area.

JACAMARS

Rufous-tailed Jacamar *Galbula ruficauda*

A pair seen on the 29th near Caxias.

TOUCANS

Black-necked Aracari *Pteroglossus aracari*

Seen on three dates, at both Arari and Caxias.

Lettered Aracari *Pteroglossus inscriptus*

Seen on two dates in forest fragments around Arari.

WOODPECKERS

Spotted Piculet *Picumnus pygmaeus*

ENDEMIC

We had a terrific views of a little family group of four birds on the afternoon of the 28th at Macacos outside of Caxias, and saw the species at the same site two days later. We also had one near the small palm swamp at Altos on the afternoon of the 29th.

*** White Woodpecker** *Melanerpes candidus*

Heard on the 27th.

Little Woodpecker *Veniliornis passerines*

Seen only on the 30th, when we had sightings at three different sites around Caxias, for a total of 7 birds observed. Now included in the *Dryobates* genus in some classifications, including on the Clements / eBird bird list.

Green-barred Woodpecker *Colaptes melanochloros*

One seen dry, disturbed cerrado outside of Caxias on the morning of the 30th.

Campo Flicker *Colaptes campestris*

A pair seen in the disturbed *cerrado* where we searched for Coal-crested Finch (successfully!) on the outskirts of Caxias on the morning of the 30th.

Ochre-backed Woodpecker *Celeus ochraceus*

ENDEMIC

We had great views of this attractive endemic *Celeus* woodpecker at Perequetê alongside the Rio Mearim near Arari on the morning of the 28th. We also heard the species on two subsequent dates in the Caxias area. A recent split from the more widespread Blond-crested Woodpecker, which is largely restricted to the Atlantic forest of east Brazil.

Kaempfer's Woodpecker *Celeus obrieni*

ENDEMIC

VULNERABLE

A male seen and two other birds heard at Macacos outside Caxias on the afternoon of the 28th. We returned to the same site on the afternoon of the 30th, keen to have another look at this striking species, and we saw what was likely the same male. Caxias is quite a reliable area for this spectacular woodpecker, a bird with a remarkable story: the type specimen was collected in 1926 in Piauí, but subsequently went missing for the next 80 years until it was re-discovered in central Brazil. Since then, fieldwork has shown that the species occurs at a number of sites in five or six different states in the central-north of the country.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Crimson-crested Woodpecker *Campephilus melanoleucos*

Pairs seen at Perequetê near Arari on the 28th, and outside of Caxias on the 29th.

OVENBIRDS

Wing-banded Hornero *Furnarius figulus*

ENDEMIC

Three birds seen on the 27th at Arari turned out to be our only record during the trip.

Ochre-cheeked Spinetail *Synallaxis scutata*

One seen at the forest patch where we had Pheasant Cuckoo and the undescribed pygmy-tyrant outside of Caxias on the 29th. Also heard on the 30th.

Yellow-chinned Spinetail *Certhiaxis cinnamomea*

Seen or heard on three dates around Arari and Caxias.

Point-tailed Palmcreeper *Berlepschia rikeri*

A pair seen at the small palm swamp at Altos near Caxias on the afternoon of the 29th.

WOODCREEPERS

Planalto Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes platyrostris*

Our only sighting came in Caxias on the 29th, when we had a pair at the Pheasant Cuckoo spot.

Straight-billed Woodcreeper *Dendroplex picus*

Seen at Arari and Caxias – recorded on four dates in total.

*** Buff-throated Woodcreeper** *Xiphorhynchus guttatus*

Heard on two dates at Caxias.

Narrow-billed Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes angustirostris*

One seen in disturbed cerrado outside of Caxias on the 30th.

Long-billed Woodcreeper *Nasica longirostris*

We saw a pair of these Amazonian woodcreepers on the morning of the 28th at Perequetê near Arari.

TYPICAL ANT BIRDS

*** Barred Antshrike** *Thamnophilus doliatus*

Heard only, on the 29th near Caxias.

*** Planalto Slaty-Antshrike** *Thamnophilus pelzelni*

ENDEMIC

Recorded twice, but heard only, on two dates in the Caxias area.

Pectoral Antwren *Herpsilochmus pectoralis*

ENDEMIC

VULNERABLE

After missing the species at Arari, we had a good sighting of a pair at Thiago's stakeout for Maranhão Hermit at Altos, a small village near Caxias. This endemic of north-eastern Brazil reaches its northwestern-most range limit in Maranhão.

White-fringed Antwren *Formicivora grisea*

A pair seen at Macacos east of Caxias on the afternoon of the 28th turned out to be our only sighting of the species during the tour.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

White-backed Fire-eye *Pyriglena leuconota*

A pair seen skulking low through a dense vine tangle at Macacos east of Caxias on the afternoon of the 28th was our only record. An upcoming split of the White-backed Fire-eye will move this species into a new taxon, East Amazonian Fire-eye, which will retain the same scientific name.

Silvered Antbird *Sclateria naevia*

A female of the *toddi* race seen in Santa Inês near Arari on the 27th.

GNATEATERS

Hooded Gnateater *Conopophaga roberti*

ENDEMIC

A pair seen and photographed in disturbed cerrado-like forest with a dense, bamboo-dominated understorey, near Macacos outside of Caxias on the afternoon of the 28th. This handsome endemic gnateater is a species which is rarely encountered on most birding tours to Brazil, as its range is centered on the easternmost Amazon in Pará and in the neighbouring of Maranhão, Piauí and Ceará.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet *Camptostoma obsoletum*

One seen at Caxias on the 30th.

Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet *Phaeomyias murina*

Seen near Caxias on the 30th.

Yellow Tyrannulet *Capsiempis flaveola*

One seen in a dense tangle of slender bamboos at Macacos outside of Caxias on the afternoon of the 28th, and heard again there when we re-visited the site on the 30th.

* **Yellow-bellied Elaenia** *Elaenia flavogaster*

“Caxias” Pygmy-Tyrant *Myiornis* sp. nov.

ENDEMIC

Thiago took us to a site where we found three of these tiny flycatchers, which belong to an undescribed taxon of *Myiornis* pygmy-tyrant.

Stripe-necked Tody-Tyrant *Hemitriccus striaticollis*

Seen only at Altos near Caxias on the 29th, where we encountered a couple of birds in scrubby forest dominated by dense vine tangles.

Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant *Hemitriccus margaritaceiventer*

Seen on two dates at Macacos east of Caxias, at the Kaempfer’s Woodpecker site.

* **Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant** *Lophotriccus galeatus*

Heard on the 30th during a search for Moustached Woodcreeper near Caxias.

Common Tody-Flycatcher *Todirostrum cinereum*

Heard only, on the 29th near Caxias.

Black-chested Tyrant *Taeniotriccus andrei*

We had a fabulous encounter with a pair at a site known to Thiago, on the 27th near Arari. This scarce flycatcher is one of the more handsome members of its family, and it is quite poorly known throughout its range which now appears to be more extensive than once thought, disjunctly covering parts of eastern Venezuela and eastern Amazonian Brazil. This site at Arari must be just about the easternmost range limit for the species.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Crested Doradito *Pseudocolopteryx sclateri*

A single bird popped up into view atop reeds in a small patch of natural marshland surrounded by extensive rice paddies in the Arari area on the 27th.

Yellow-breasted Flycatcher *Tolmomyias flaviventris*

Seen at Caxias on the 29th, and heard on two or three more dates. The subspecies found here would be the nominate form; some authorities recognize multiple species in the Yellow-breasted Flycatcher complex – this would be the Ochre-lored Flycatcher in those checklists.

White-headed Marsh-Tyrant *Arundinicola leucocephala*

A female seen at Arari on the 27th was our only sighting.

Cattle Tyrant *Machetornis rixosa*

Seen only on the 30th.

Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus*

A single bird seen in the subcanopy of tall dry forest outside Caxias on the 29th.

Rufous Casiornis *Casiornis rufa*

One seen in dry forest north of Caxias on the 30th as we searched (fruitlessly) for Moustached Woodcreeper.

Short-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus ferox*

Seen on a couple of dates near Caxias.

Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus*

Seen on the 30th near Caxias.

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*

Recorded on five dates.

Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua*

Recorded on three dates.

Rusty-margined Flycatcher *Myiozetetes cayanensis*

Seen or heard on four dates, mostly in the Caxias area.

Streaked Flycatcher *Myiodynastes maculatus*

Seen or heard on four dates.

Suphury Flycatcher *Tyrannopsis sulphurea*

Seen on three dates around Caxias.

Piratic Flycatcher *Legatus leucophaeus*

Recorded once near Arari, and heard in the Caxias area.

Variegated Flycatcher *Empidonomus varius*

At least five birds seen on the 30th at Caxias.

Crowned Slaty Flycatcher *Empidonomus aurantioatrocristatus*

One seen near Caxias on the 30th was our only record.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*

Recorded on five dates.

COTINGAS

Bearded Bellbird *Procnias averano*

Thiago took us to a spot in the Inhamum Municipal Park just outside Caxias on the 29th. Here we had a wonderful time watching at least two, perhaps three different males calling from atop a couple of preferred display perches. We were privileged to be able to watch the birds at leisure, enjoying their antics through the scope and taking quite a few pictures and some good video, too.

MANAKINS

Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin *Neopelma pallescens*

Singles seen on three dates in the Caxias area.

White-bearded Manakin *Manacus manacus*

A female seen on the morning of the 30th north of Caxias was our only sighting.

Blue-backed Manakin *Chiroxiphia pareola*

Seen near Caxias on the 30th.

TITYRAS & ALLIES

Black-tailed Tityra *Tityra cayana*

A pair that landed in the leafless tree which we were watching patiently in hopes that the Bearded Bellbird would appear caused a bit of excitement, until it registered that they were much too small to be the bellbirds. This sighting, in the APA Municipal Inhamum near Caxias, was our only sighting of this species.

Masked Tityra *Tityra semifasciata*

A female seen on the 29th.

Green-backed Becard *Pachyramphus viridis*

We had a pair in an area of dry *cerradão* forest near Caxias on the morning of the 30th.

White-winged Becard *Pachyramphus polychopterus*

A male seen on the 30th near Caxias.

VIREOS

Chivi Vireo *Vireo chivi*

Seen on a couple of dates near Caxias.

*** Rufous-browed Peppershrike** *Cyclarhis gujanensis*

Heard only on the 30th.

JAYS

White-naped Jay *Cyanocorax cyanopogon* **ENDEMIC**

After having only fleeting glimpses of these birds on the afternoon of the 28th near Macacos outside of Caxias, we returned to the same site on the afternoon of the 30th and found a trio at the very last minute, as we were starting to drive away down the deserted country highway, in fact.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

SWALLOWS

Southern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*

Gray-breasted Martin *Progne chalybea*

Brown-chested Martin *Progne tapera*

White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

WRENS

*** Moustached Wren** *Pheugopedius genibarbis*

Heard on the 27th near Arari and on the 29th at Caxias, but not seen.

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

GNATCATCHERS

*** Long-billed Gnatwren** *Ramphocaenus melanurus*

Heard on the 28th and 29th in the Caxias area, but not seen.

Tropical Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila plumbea*

A sighting on the 30th near Caxias turned out to be our only encounter with the species.

DONACOBIOUS

Black-capped Donacobius *Donacobius atricapilla*

Seen on the 27th and 28th in the Arari area.

THRUSHES

Pale-breasted Thrush *Turdus leucomelas*

The most common thrush in the Caxias area, where we had them in numbers on three dates.

Cocoa Thrush *Turdus fumigatus*

At least four individuals seen at an overgrown orchard well known to Thiago, on the 27th near Caxias.

Spectacled Thrush *Turdus nudigenis*

Like the preceding species, Thiago knew exactly where to take us to look for this species, which isn't frequently encountered when birding in Brazil. We saw a single bird mixed in with the Cocoa Thrushes on the 27th near Caxias.

MOCKINGBIRDS

Chalk-browed Mockingbird *Mimus saturninus*

At least six seen on the 30th outside of Caxias.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

NEW WORLD WARBLERS

Flavescent Warbler *Myiothlypis flaveola*

One seen near Caxias on the 30th.

TANAGERS & ALLIES

Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola*

Seen or heard on four dates.

Hooded Tanager *Nemosia pileata*

We revved up a couple of these striking tanagers with some pygmy-owl imitations in disturbed dry forest mixed with *cerradão* to the north of Caxias on the 30th.

Chestnut-vented Conebill *Conirostrum speciosum*

A pair seen on the 30th near Caxias.

Silver-beaked Tanager *Ramphocelus carbo*

Relatively common, recorded on four dates in more humid habitats.

Palm Tanager *Thraupis palmarum*

Common and seen on four dates.

Sayaca Tanager *Thraupis sayaca*

Interesting to see one of these near Caxias on the 30th. The contact zone between this species and Blue-gray Tanager must be somewhere in the northern Maranhão.

Burnished-buff Tanager *Tangara cayana*

One of two pairs came in with Hooded Tanagers, Chestnut-vented Conebills and others to check out our pygmy-owl imitations in mixed forest to the north of Caxias on the 30th.

Blue Dacnis *Dacnis cayana*

Seen on a couple of dates around Caxias.

Buff-throated Saltator *Saltator maximus*

Seen on the 30th near Caxias.

SEEDEATERS & ALLIES

Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina*

Common and widespread, recorded on three or four dates.

Rusty-collared Seedeater *Sporophila collaris*

A lone female seen on the 27th in an area of natural marshland between the rice paddies in Arari.

Yellow-bellied Seedeater *Sporophila nigricollis*

Fairly common, probably more numerous than we realized, in the paddies and alongside roads in the Arari area.

Copper Seedeater *Sporophila bouvreuil*

Two birds seen on the 27th near Arari.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

Coal-crested Finch *Charitospiza eucosma*

We had a three of these *cerrado* specialties in an area of dry, grazed *cerrado* to the north of Caxias on the morning of the 30th. The presence of this species in the Caxias area pays credit to the diversity of habitats found in and around the city, and shows just how interesting northern Maranhão can be in terms of its position at crossroads of avian distributions.

Pileated Finch *Coryphospingus pileatus*

We had a half dozen birds at the same site as the above species, on the 30th near Caxias.

Pectoral Sparrow *Arremon taciturnus*

Seen only on the afternoon of the 30th at Macacos outside of Caxias.

CARDINAL GROSBEAKS

Yellow-green Grosbeak *Caryothraustes canadensis*

We had a band of 4 birds in Caxias, in tall semi-deciduous forest at the site we visited to look for the undescribed pygmy-tyrant, on the morning of the 29th.

Blackish-blue Seedeater *Amaurospiza moesta*

We found a male at the Kaempfer's Woodpecker site in the Macacos area outside of Caxias on the afternoon of the 30th, where it was frequenting a small stand of slender bamboos.

NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS

White-browed Meadowlark *Sturnella superciliaris*

Seen on the 26th at Arari, where it was generally outnumbered by the following species.

Red-breasted Meadowlark *Sturnella militaris*

Common and recorded daily at Arari.

Chopi Blackbird *Gnorimopsar chopi*

Seen only on the 30th near Caxias.

Chestnut-capped Blackbird *Chrysomus ruficapillus*

Recorded daily in the rice paddies in Arari, where they numbered into the thousands.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*

Seen on the 28th.

Campo Troupial *Icterus jamacaii*

ENDEMIC

Seen on the 27th.

Yellow-rumped Cacique *Cacicus cela*

Recorded on 3 dates at Arari and Caxias.

Crested Oropendola *Psarocolius decumanus*

Seen on three dates.

SISKINS & ALLIES

*** Purple-throated Euphonia** *Euphonia chlorotica*

Heard only, on a couple of dates around Caxias.

BIRDING MATO GROSSO
TRIP REPORT – MARANHÃO / BRAZIL

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*