

BRAZIL: EMAS NATIONAL PARK

OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 10, 2007

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EMAS NATIONAL PARK, GOIAS, BRAZIL

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Leader: Andrew Whittaker

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Emas National Park captivated us all with its sweeping beauty, a remnant of the once vast grasslands that blanketed this region in south-central Brazil. Encompassing a rich mosaic of exotic landscapes, each sheltering its own unique flora and fauna, Emas represents a true gem in the Brazilian park system. Who among us could forget the vivid images of rolling expanses of golden grasslands scattered with countless red termite mounds; of lush green gallery forests embracing crystal-clear streams cascading over worn terraces of rock; or of the amazing complexity of the various types of *cerrado* brushland? We immersed ourselves in the rich tapestry of this fire-dominated ecosystem, taking time to explore the many microhabitats and ferret out their many avian and mammalian specialties. Recent controlled burns within the park were the trigger for a spectacular explosion of flowering annuals, the diversity and abundance of which carpeted the landscape in a riotous rainbow of color. These burns were also the stimulus for the nomadic Campo Miner to launch its breeding season, and we were fortunate to witness these poorly-known birds in full, hovering display. No doubt, the abundance of new greenery also accounted for our easy viewing of small herds of the near-threatened Pampas deer.

As usual, birding was both easy and rewarding, and the mammal-viewing was exceptional. Topping everything were our multiple fantastic studies of the recently rediscovered Cone-billed Tanager. We had close studies of no less than six birds, including an apparently mated pair and two males fighting with one another. We may have been the first US-based tour group ever to see this species, of which the only existing specimen is the type, which was collected in 1938! Certainly, no group of birders has seen as many of these nearly mythical birds as we did.

The picturesque green ribbons of gallery forest also produced strikingly vivid male Helmeted Manakins, White-striped Warbler (with its memorable song), Red-billed Scythebill, the ultra-rare Great-billed Seed-Finch, a spectacular Golden-rumped Euphonia, and the localized and rarely seen Planalto Foliage-gleaner. Graceful Long-winged Harriers quartered over the golden grasslands, while below them the comical but lovely male Cock-tailed Tyrants helicoptered frantically above the tall grass. In the early mornings the vibrant songs of Sedge Wrens filled the air, and we enjoyed the rarely seen, looping flight displays of the endangered Bearded Tachuri as it launched itself again and again from the tallest grass stems. Handsome Black-masked Finches sang from small termite mounds amongst the shorter grass, where Lesser Nothuras played hard to get.

Unfortunately, the down-side of the extensive controlled burns was that we were unable to find the mixed-species flocks of seedeaters that usually abound here at this time of

year. However, as compensation, the abundant fruit in the *cerrado* attracted countless Blue-and-yellow Macaws, along with several flocks of the odd-looking, nomadic Yellow-faced Parrot (now threatened) and the much commoner Turquoise-fronted Parrots. Other *cerrado* highlights included the local Yellow-billed Blue Finch, the rarely seen Rufous-sided Pygmy-Tyrant, a dazzling male Horned Sunbeam, and an amazingly responsive pair of White-eared Puffbirds that landed within feet of our group.

Mammal highlights were frequent, including close encounters with the majestic maned wolf, the improbable giant anteater, a huge Brazilian tapir, both hoary and crab-eating foxes, and a huge herd of white-lipped peccaries. However, our multiple armadillo encounters scored highest on the unintentional comedy meter, especially watching the adult yellow armadillo teaching his youngster the correct way to burrow, right in the middle of the dirt track we were driving on!

The first rains were timed perfectly, allowing us the rare opportunity one night to observe a breathtaking landscape full of myriads of termite mounds lit up like miniature Christmas trees by countless bioluminescent beetle larvae. Our prime nocturnal target, however, was the elegant White-winged Nightjar, and we couldn't have been more successful, encountering multiple males and observing them both in flight and perched; one was so close we could reach out and touch it.

For all of this, the trip highlight for me was the whole Giant Snipe experience. As dusk rapidly approached, I hit the tape one more time, and a pair of large, dark shapes materialized right in front of us. I hit the spotlight, and there, framed in the beam, was the near-mythical Giant Snipe in all of its glory, with tail cocked, and displaying that enormous dagger of a bill!

All in all, many wonderful memories and great birding moments were shared by a super group of birders. As I reflect on the bucolic, grassy landscapes, the daily blazing sunsets, and skies filled with thousands of migrant Cliff Swallows, I can't help but look forward to my return visit.

Itinerary:

10/31 - Home to São Paulo.

11/01 - Arrival in São Paulo; flight onto Brasilia, overnight at Monumental Bittar.

11/02 - Drove from Brasília to Emas National Park with some birding stops on route; night Chapadão do Ceu.

11/03 - Emas NP

11/04 - Emas NP

11/05 - Emas NP

11/06 - Emas NP

11/07 - Emas NP

11/08 - Drove out birding through Emas NP early a.m. and back to Brasilia; farewell meal for those not continuing onto the Amazonian section and Carajás National Park.

11/09 - Brasilia onto São Paulo; connecting with homebound flight to the US.

11/10 - Arrival home.

TOP 5 BIRDS (as voted by the group)

- 1- Cone-billed Tanager
- 2- Giant Snipe
- 3- White-winged Nightjar
- 4- Red-legged Seriema
- 5- Yellow-faced Parrot

KEY

* Heard

BOLD important rarely seen species

Note: In the following list, trinomials are used to highlight subspecies of particular interest.

Birds:

RHEAS (Rheidae)

Greater Rhea (*Rhea americana*) – Multiple days with 20 or more, including males looking after broods, the largest of which was 18..

TINAMOUS (Tinamidae)

Undulated Tinamou (*Crypturellus undulatus*) *

Small-billed Tinamou (*Crypturellus parvirostris*) *

Red-winged Tinamou (*Rhynchotus rufescens*) – Several great studies of this large, well-marked Tinamou.

Lesser Nothura (*Nothura minor*) – One bird seen in flight by some, with several others heard.

Spotted Nothura (*Nothura maculosa*) – Many close studies.

DARTERS & ANHINGAS (Anhingidae)

Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*)

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNES (Ardeidae)

Whistling Heron (*Syrigma sibilatrix*) – Several of these smart herons seen well.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)

Striated Heron (*Butorides striatus*)

Rufescent Tiger-Heron (*Tigrisoma lineatum*)

STORKS (Ciconidae)

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) – One seen by some on the way to the park.

IBISES & SPOONBILL (Threskiornithidae)

Buff-necked Ibis (*Theristicus caudatus*) – Common

Green Ibis (*Mesembrinibis cayennensis*)

Bare-faced Ibis (*Phimosus infuscatus*)

DUCKS, GEESE & SWANS (Anatidae)

White-faced Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*)

Black-bellied Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*)

Brasilian Teal (*Amazonetta brasiliensis*)

NEW WORLD VULTURES (Cathartidae)

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture (*Cathartes burrovianus*)

HAWKS, EAGLES & KITES (Accipitridae)

Hook-billed Kite (*Chondrohierax uncinatus*) – Good studies of a close soaring male.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*)

Snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*)

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) – Three soaring birds, two adults and one immature, which, presumably, were migrating south; seen near the park head quarters on November 7.

Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinia plumbea*)

Long-winged Harrier (*Circus buffoni*) – Spectacular, graceful raptors,. We saw both dark and pale morphs)

Bicolored Hawk (*Accipiter bicolor*) – Good spotting Chris!

Crane Hawk (*Geranospiza caerulescens*)

Savanna Hawk (*Buteogallus meridionalis*)

Roadside Hawk (*Buteo magnirostris*)

White-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albicaudatus*)

FALCONS & CARACARAS (Falconidae)

Southern Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*)

Yellow-headed Caracara (*Milvago chimachima*)

Laughing Falcon (*Herpetotheres cachinnans*)

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)

Aplomado Falcon (*Falco femoralis*) – Multiples seen daily, including several excellent close studies. Nowhere is this super raptor so common as in this park.

GUANS, CHACHALACAS & ALLIES (Cracidae)

Bare-faced Curassow (*Crax fasciolata*) – Wonderful looks at a very confiding pair.

LIMPKIN (Aramididae)

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*)

RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS (Rallidae)

Uniform Crake (*Amaurolimnas concolor*) *

Ash-throated Crake (*Porzana albicollis*) *

Ocellated Crake (*Micropygia schomburgkii*) * – We tried real hard on multiple occasions, but this year they were apparently not in a breeding mode, and therefore, unresponsive to tape. This seemed to be the case with all rails this trip.

SERIEMAS (Cariamidae)

Red-legged Seriema (*Cariama cristata*) – Stunning looks at an aggressive pair as they defended their youngsters in a spectacular distraction display around our van. We all know exactly how the wonderful VENT catalog photo was taken!

JACANAS (Jacanidae)

Wattled Jacana (*Jacana jacana*)

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS (Charadriidae)

Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*)

SANDPIPERS & ALLIES (Scolopacidae)

Giant Snipe (*Gallinago undulate gigantea*) – What a crippling display, as I was able to tape a pair of these huge, nearly mythical shorebirds into an opening and then spotlight one of them only a few meters away! A most memorable experience, particularly the male's display dive over our heads in the dark that was so loud it caused us all to duck! Certainly my birding highlight of 2007!

Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*)

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) – One lost juvenile seen at that artificial sandpit was almost certainly the first state record for Goias.

White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*)

DOVES & PIGEONS (Columbidae)

Picazuro Pigeon (*Patagioenas picazuro*)

Pale-vented Pigeon (*Patagioenas cayennensis*)

Eared Dove (*Zenaida auriculata*)

Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*)

Picui Ground-Dove (*Columbina picui*)

Ruddy Ground-Dove (*Columbina talpacoti*)

Scaled Dove (*Columbina squammata*)

Blue Ground-Dove (*Claravis pretiosa*)

White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*)

PARROTS, MACAWS & ALLIES (Psittacidae)

Blue-and-yellow Macaw (*Ara ararauna*) – Spectacular numbers seen daily.

Red-shouldered Macaw (*Diopsittaca nobilis*)

Peach-fronted Parakeet (*Aratinga aurea*)

Yellow-chevroned Parakeet (*Brotogeris chiriri*)

Turquoise-fronted Parrot (*Amazona aestiva*)

Yellow-faced Parrot (*Alipiopsitta xanthops*) – Fantastic close studies of this endangered and odd parrot; the only member of a monotypic genus.

CUCKOOS (Cuculidae)

Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*)
Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*)
Greater Ani (*Crotophaga major*)
Guira Cuckoo (*Guira guira*)

BARN OWLS (Tytonidae)

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) – On our best morning we saw 6, just on our drive into the park!

TYPICAL OWLS (Strigidae)

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*)
Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) – Odd looking bird stained rufous by the soil.

NIGHTJARS & ALLIES (Caprimulgidae)

Nacunda Nighthawk (*Podager nacunda*) – It was exciting watching them within a few meters as they hunted in the pre-dawn around the strong entrance lights.

Pauraque (*Nyctidromus albicollis*)
Spot-tailed Nightjar (*Caprimulgus maculicaudus*)

White-winged Nightjar (*Caprimulgus candicans*) – Spectacular studies of this endangered and poorly known nightjar. A stunning male observed well in flight and perched at point blank range.

SWIFTS (Apodidae)

White-collard Swift (*Streptoprogne zonaris*)
Sooty Swift (*Cypseloides fumigatus*) – Several flocks; a surprise to find here!
Sick's Swift (*Chaetura meridionalis*)
Short-tailed Swift (*Chaetura brachyura*)
Great Dusky Swift (*Cypseloides senex*)
Fork-tailed Palm-Swift (*Tachornis squamata*)

HUMMINGBIRDS (Trochilidae)

Planalto Hermit (*Phaethornis pretrei*)
Swallow-tailed Hummingbird (*Eupetomena macrourus*)
White-vented Violet-ear (*Colibri serrirostris*)
Black-throated Mango (*Anthracothorax nigricollis*)
Glittering-bellied Emerald (*Chlorostilbon aureoventris*)
Fork-tailed Woodnymph (*Thalurania furcata*)
White-tailed Goldenthrroat (*Polytmus guainumbi*)
Horned Sungem (*Heliactin bilopha*)

KINGFISHERS (Alcedinidae)

Ringed Kingfisher (*Ceryle torquata*)
Amazon Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle amazona*)
Green Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle americana*)
American Pygmy Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle aenea*)

JACAMARS (Galbulidae)

Rufous-tailed Jacamar (*Galbula ruficauda*)

PUFFBIRDS (Bucconidae)

White-eared Puffbird (*Nystalus chacuru*) – Superb, in-your-face views.

Black-fronted Nunbird (*Monasa nigrifrons*)

TOUCANS (Ramphastidae)

Chestnut-eared Aracari (*Pteroglossus castanotis*) *

Toco Toucan (*Ramphastos toco*)

WOODPECKERS & Allies (Picidae)

White-wedged Piculet (*Picumnus albosquamatus*)

White Woodpecker (*Melanerpes candidus*)

Little Woodpecker (*Veniliornis passerinus*)

Green-barred Woodpecker (*Colaptes melanochloros*)

Campo Flicker (*Colaptes campestris*)

Pale-crested Woodpecker (*Celeus lugubris*) – Seen by some flying across road on our way to the park.

Lineated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus*)

OVENBIRDS (Furnariidae)

Campo Miner (*Geobates poecilopterus*) – Great studies of this near-threatened species in the recently burnt *campo sujo*, where we were treated to their display flights.

Rufous Hornero (*Furnarius rufus*)

Pale-breasted Spinetail (*Synallaxis albescens*)

Rusty-backed Spinetail (*Cranioleuca vulpina*) *

Yellow-chinned Spinetail (*Certhiaxis cinnamomea*)

Greater Thornbird (*Phacellodomus ruber*)

Streaked Xenops (*Xenops rutilans*)

Planalto Foliage-gleaner (*Syndactyla dimidiatum*) – Good studies of this rare foliage-gleaner.

WOODCREEPERS (Dendrocolaptidae)

Olivaceous Woodcreeper (*Sittasomus griseicapillus*) *

Planalto Woodcreeper (*Dendrocolaptes platyrostris intermedius*) – A likely future split from the nominate form.

Narrow-billed Woodcreeper (*Lepidocolaptes angustirostris*)

Red-billed Scythebill (*Campylorhamphus trocilirostris*)

TYPICAL ANTBIRDS (Thamnophilidae)

Barred Antshrike (*Thamnophilus doliatus*)

Rufous-winged Antshrike (*Thamnophilus torquatus*)

Large-billed Antwren (*Herpsilochmus longirostris*)

Rusty-backed Antwren (*Formicivora rufa*)

TAPACULOS (Rhinocryptidae)

Collared Crescent-chest (*Melanopareia torquata*) – Repeated stunning studies of this beauty.

MANAKINS (Pipridae)

Helmeted Manakin (*Antilophia galeatus*) – Simply stunning males!

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS (Tyrannidae)

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet (*Camptostoma obsoletum*)

Mouse-colored Tyrannulet (*Phaeomyias murinus*)

Yellow-bellied Elaenia (*Elaenia flavogaster*)

Olivaceous Elaenia (*Elaenia mesoleuca*)

Plain-crested Elaenia (*Elaenia cristata*)

Lesser Elaenia (*Elaenia chiriquensis*)

Highland Elaenia (*Elaenia obscura*) *

Sooty Tyrannulet (*Serpophaga nigricans*) – Nice looks.

Planalto Tyrannulet (*Phyllomyias fasciatus*) *

Southern Scrub Flycatcher (*Sublegatus modestus*)

Chapada Flycatcher (*Suiriri islerorum*) – Great studies of this recently described species as it showed off its unique wing-lifting display.

Sharp-tailed Tyrant (*Culicivora caudacuta*) – Great looks at this tiny, odd- looking flycatcher with a long tail and a stubby bill.

Bearded Tachuri (*Polystictus pectoralis*) – Several wonderful displaying males of this near-threatened grassland flycatcher. One memorable male came within feet of us as he clung to the tall dead grass stems looking for an intruder.

Rufous-sided Pygmy-Tyrant (*Euscarthmus rufomarginatus*) – Great looks of this endangered *cerrado*/grassland flycatcher)

Stripe-necked Tody-Tyrant (*Hemitriccus striaticollis*) *

Common Tody-Flycatcher (*Todirostrum cinereum*)

Yellow-olive Flycatcher (*Tolmomyias sulphurescens pallescens*)

Bran- Colored Flycatcher (*Myiophobus fasciatus*)

White-headed Marsh Tyrant (*Arundinicola leucocephala*)

Gray Monjita (*Xolmis cinerea*)

White-rumped Monjita (*Xolmis velata*)

Cock-tailed Tyrant (*Alectrurus tricolor*) – Wonderful studies of comical males displaying over the grasslands like miniature helicopters.

Streamer-tailed Tyrant (*Gubernetes yetapa*)

Cattle Tyrant (*Machetornis rixosus*)

Short-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus ferox*)

Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*)

Lesser Kiskadee (*Philohydor lictor*)

Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*)

Rusty-margined Flycatcher (*Myiozetetes cayanensis*)

Streaked Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes maculatus*)

White-throated Kingbird (*Tyrannus albogularis*)

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*)
Sulphury Flycatcher (*Tyrannopsis sulphurea*)
Masked Tityra (*Tityra semifasciata*)

SWALLOWS (Hirundinidae)

Brown-chested Martin (*Progne tapera*)
Gray-breasted Martin (*Progne chalybea*)
White-rumped Swallow (*Tachycineta leucorrhoa*)
Cliff Swallow (*Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*) – Incredibly high numbers; certainly a major wintering area for this species.
Tawny-headed Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx fucata*)
Southern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*)
Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

WRENS (Troglodytidae)

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)
Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis polyglottus*) – Superb voice and certainly a distinct species from Sedge Wren, though taxonomy complex and still not fully understood. Often referred to as “Grass Wren”.

MOCKINGBIRDS & ALLIES (Mimidae)

Chalk-browed Mockingbird (*Mimus saturninus*)

THRUSHES (Turdidae)

Pale-breasted Thrush (*Turdus leucomelas*)

GNATCATCHERS (Poliophtilidae)

Masked Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila dumicola*)

CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES (Corvidae)

Curl-crested Jay (*Cyanocorax cristatellus*) – A really spectacular Neotropical jay.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS (Passeridae)

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

VIREOS & ALLIES (Vireonidae)

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*)
Rufous-browed Peppershrike (*Cyclarhis gujanensis*)

SISKINS, CROSSBILL & ALLIES (Fringillidae)

Purple-throated Euphonia (*Euphonia chlorotica*)
Violaceous Euphonia (*Euphonia violacea*)
Golden-rumped Euphonia (*Euphonia cyanocephala*) – Stunning bird, and somewhat of a surprise to find here.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS (Parulidae)

Tropical Parula (*Parula pitiayumi*)

Masked Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis aequinoctialis*)

White-striped Warbler (*Basileuterus leucophrys*) – What great looks, and such a fantastic song from this smart-looking endemic warbler.

BANANAQUIT (Coerebidae)

Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*)

TANAGERS & ALLIES (Thraupidae)

Chestnut-vented Conebill (*Conirostrum speciosum*)

White-banded Tanager (*Neothraupis fasciata*)

White-rumped Tanager (*Cypsnagra hirundinacea*)

Cone-billed Tanager (*Conothraupis mesoleucus*) – Until recently, known from only one male collected in 1938, north of Cuiaba, Mato Grosso. We had repeated fantastic studies of not one bird but 5, including a pair, and got to hear its lovely song! We even witnessed two males fighting. Quite rightly rated bird of the trip!

White-lined Tanager (*Tachyphonus rufus*)

Silver-beaked Tanager (*Ramphocelus carbo*)

Sayaca Tanager (*Thraupis sayaca*)

Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*)

Burnished-buff Tanager (*Tangara cayana*)

Red-legged Honeycreeper (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*)

Blue Dacnis (*Dacnis cayana*)

Swallow Tanager (*Tersina viridis*)*

BUNTINGS, SPARROWS & ALLIES (Emberizidae)

Black-masked Finch (*Coryphaspiza melanotis*) – Multiple close studies of this interesting species.

Blue-black Grassquit (*Volatinia jacarina*)

Plumbeous Seedeater (*Sporophila plumbea*)

Capped Seedeater (*Sporophila bouvreuil saturata*) – We had saw the distinctive looking pale form that breeds in the São Paulo area.

Double-collared Seedeater (*Sporophila caeruleascens*)

Saffron Finch (*Sicalis flaveola*)

Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch (*Emberizoides herbicola*)

Lesser Grass-Finch (*Emberizoides ypiranganus*)

Great-billed Seed-Finch (*Oryzoborus maximiliani*) – We had a female. This is an incredibly rare and critically endangered species throughout SA. Unfortunately the cagebird trade has almost completely wiped out the wild population.

Lesser Seed-Finch (*Oryzoborus angolensis*)*

Grassland Sparrow (*Ammodramus humeralis*)

SALTATORS, CARDINALS & ALLIES (Cardinalidae)

Grayish Saltator (*Saltator coerulescens*)

Black-throated Saltator (*Saltator atricollis*)

Yellow-billed Blue Finch (*Porphyrospiza caerulescens*) – After some searching, we finally got a fantastic looking adult male.

TROUPIALS & ALLIES (Icteridae)

White-browed Blackbird (*Sturnella superciliaris*)

Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*)

Epaulet Oriole (*Icterus cayanensis*)

Crested Oropendola (*Psarocolius decumanus*)

Yellow-rumped Marshbird (*Pseudoleistes guirahuro*)

Chopi Blackbird (*Gnorimopsar chopi*)

Total 215 species birds and 11 mammals

Mammals:

Maned Wolf

Giant Anteater - 2

Brazilian Tapir

White-lipped Peccary

Collared Peccary

Pampas Deer

Crab-eating Fox

Hoary Fox

Yellow Armadillo

Seven-banded Long-nosed Armadillo

Pampas Skunk

Neotropical Rattlesnake

Bioluminescent beetle larva lighting up the termite mounds!