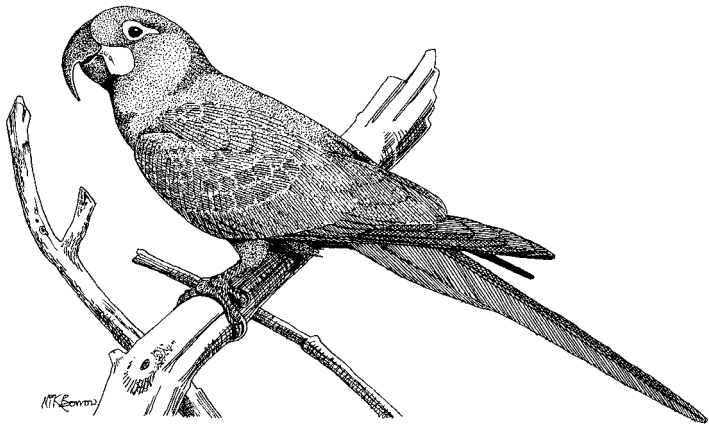


NORTHEAST BRAZIL

Saturday 14th November – Monday 7th December 2009 (24 days)

Leader: Mark Van Beirs

Group Size Limit: 9



Lear's Macaw (Nik Borrow)

The vast expanses of Brazil contain some of South America's least known and most endangered birds. This huge country boasts an impressive bird list of nearly 1700 species, but it is the very high number of endemics, some 190 in total, that particularly lures the international birder to this enormous chunk of South America. Most of these endemics live in the humid hill forests along the Atlantic coast, but quite a number are found in the drier habitats of the northeast. Brazil is so large that it has to be looked on as if it were a continent by itself, and so a single birding trip there can never do it justice. On this exciting journey through Northeast Brazil we will concentrate on finding the little known birds of the caatinga, the deciduous forests, the central Brazilian tablelands and the northern Atlantic humid forests. More than 15 species new to science have been described from this forgotten corner of Brazil in the last 20 years. The most characteristic habitat of the northeast is caatinga: low thorny woodland and scrub intermixed with many cacti and terrestrial bromeliads. Poor soils and irregular rainfall create a really harsh landscape. This arid and very special environment is highly threatened by overgrazing and clearing for agriculture and is home to several of the rarest birds in the world. Best known amongst these is the magnificent Lear's Macaw, of which only 250 or so survive in the wild. Another gem is the recently-described, gorgeous Araripe Manakin, which can only be found at the base of the cliffs of the Chapada do

Araripe. We will also explore the deciduous forests of Bahia, where several rare antbirds are to be found, and the scenically-pleasing central Brazilian tablelands, home to some lovely endemic hummingbirds. The 'zona de mata' (literally meaning forest zone) is restricted to a narrow coastal strip of only 100 kilometres wide, but little is now left of the dense Atlantic coastal forest that greeted the first Europeans in the 16th century, as this better-watered region is where most of the population now lives. We will start our explorations near Fortaleza, the capital of the state of Ceará, where we will search the mangroves for Little Wood-Rail and where Pygmy Nightjars roost on a nearby rocky outcrop. In the Serra do Baturité we will try to locate Gould's Toucanet, Ochraceous Piculet and Buff-breasted Tody-Tyrant. Further south, in the forests of the Chapada do Araripe, we will hope to find Red-shouldered Spinetail, Great Xenops, White-browed Antpitta and the exquisite Araripe Manakin. The famous Estação Ecologica do Raso da Catarina holds most of the remaining population of the spectacular Lear's Macaw and getting splendid views of these magical creatures will be a primary goal of this tour. Further east, in remnants of coastal Atlantic Forest, we shall hope to find endemic rarities like White-collared Kite, Forbes's Blackbird and Yellow-faced Siskin. Further inland, exploration of other remnants of this once vast forest should add Tawny Piculet, Alagoas and Orange-bellied Antwrens, and Seven-coloured Tanager to the tally. In

the coastal forests of Sergipe we will look for the rare Fringe-backed Fire-eye. We will then make our way into the interior, bound for the Chapada Diamantina. Here our main target is the exquisite Hooded Visorbearer, but the supporting cast includes the more subtly-plumaged Sincora Antwren and Buff-throated Pampa-Finch. The Boa Nova area is a transition zone between several bird-rich habitats and holds a high concentration of little-known species, foremost amongst which are Narrow-billed Antwren and the extremely rare Slender Antbird. Further east, near the coast, we will try to locate the amazing Pink-legged Graveteiro in the shade trees of cocoa plantations and Bahia Tapaculo and Bahia Antwren in the remaining restinga forest habitat. By the time we have to return home we will have gained an excellent understanding of what birding in this forgotten corner of Brazil is all about.

Mark Van Beirs has travelled very extensively in Brazil, spending many months in the field. Birdquest has operated tours to Northeast Brazil since 2000.

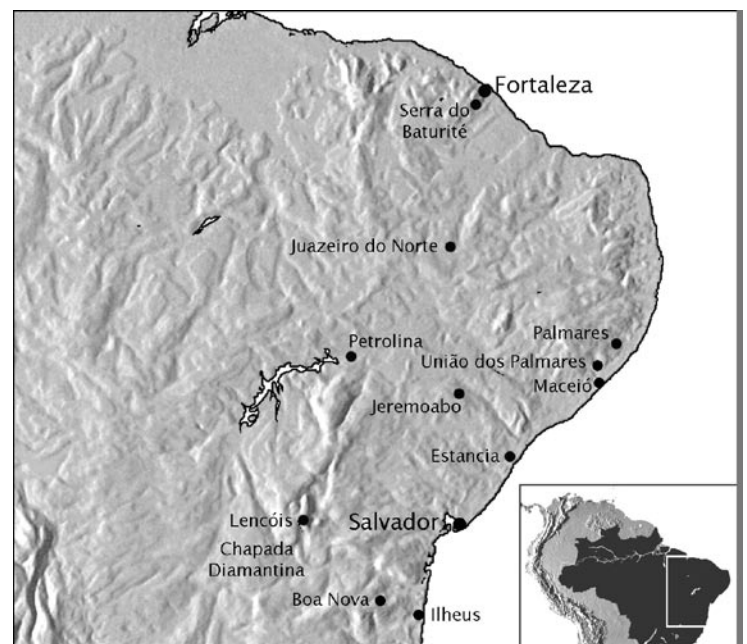
Itinerary

Day 1 Morning flight from London bound for Fortaleza via Lisbon. We will arrive at Fortaleza, the capital of the state of Ceará and the major commercial centre of northeastern Brazil, in the early evening. We will spend the night on the coast not far from this sprawling city with its more than 1.8 million inhabitants.

Day 2 This morning we will visit an area of mangroves where we stand a good chance of encountering the

virtually unknown Little Wood-Rail, a close relative of the widespread and better known Grey-necked Wood-Rail. This endemic is confined to the central coastal region of Brazil and can be found foraging along the muddy edges of mangrove swamps. Later we will visit a kopje-like outcrop surrounded by caatinga vegetation, where we should find a small congregation of endemic Pygmy Nightjars. This little known species roosts on bare rocks where it is quite hard to locate because of its very efficient camouflage. In the afternoon we will drive inland to the Serra do Baturité for a two nights stay.

Day 3 We will spend most of the day exploring the dry evergreen forest on the higher slopes of the Serra do Baturité. Situated at the edge of the endless caatinga, this isolated range holds a very interesting avifauna, which includes a mixture of northeastern Brazilian endemics, distinctive, often disjunct races of more widespread species (some of which may in the near future prove to be full species) and a number of bird species with a wider distribution. Our hotel is located in an untouched stretch of splendid woodland, where our main quarry is the handsome, but extremely-localized Buff-breasted Tody-Tyrant, a small unobtrusive flycatcher that we should find quietly perched in a vine tangle in the subcanopy. We will probably hear the distinctive croaking of the Gould's Toucanet long before we see this gaudy bird, which is represented here by the isolated and aptly-named *baturitensis* subspecies. Adorable endemic Ochraceous Piculets cling to thin twigs, whilst Rufous Gnateaters (of the race *cearae*, in



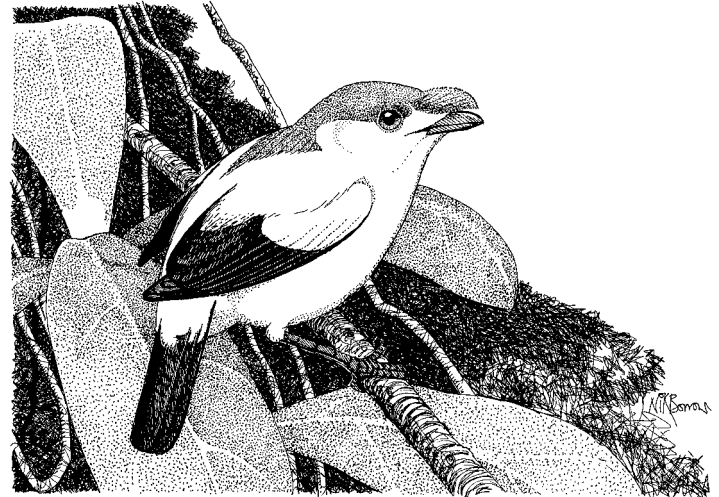
which males lack the grey supercilium – another future split as Caatinga or Ceara Gnateater) hide in the undergrowth. Flowering bushes and heliconias attract jewels like Planalto and Reddish Hermits, Fork-tailed Woodnymph and the spectacular Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, while extremely handsome Red-necked Tanagers visit fruiting trees. Other species to look for include such endemics as Wing-banded Hornero, Grey-headed Spinetail and Planalto Slaty Antshrike, as well as Rufous-thighed Hawk, White-tipped Dove, Squirrel Cuckoo, Green Kingfisher, the striking Blond-crested Woodpecker, Little Woodpecker, Straight-billed, Buff-throated and Lesser Woodcreepers, Sooty-fronted and Ochre-cheeked Spinetails, the secretive Rufous-breasted Leaf-tosser, Plain Antvireo, Black-capped Antwren, the skulking Short-tailed Antthrush, the spectacular Band-tailed Manakin, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Planalto Tyrannulet, Yellow-olive and Yellow-breasted Flycatchers, White-throated Spadebill, Black-tailed Flycatcher (behaving exactly like an Old World fantail), Swallow, Euler's, Boat-billed, Streaked and Social Flycatchers, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Chivi Vireo, Rufous-bellied and Pale-breasted Thrushes, Moustached Wren, Golden-crowned Warbler, the skulking and attractive Pectoral Sparrow, the gorgeous endemic Red-cowled Cardinal, Bananaquit, Guira, Sayaca, Palm and Burnished-buff Tanagers, Purple-throated Euphonia, Blue Dacnis and Epaulet Oriole.

Day 4 After some final birding in the Serra do Baturité we will drive to Juazeiro do Norte in southeastern Ceará for a two nights stay. Some short stops in agricultural areas, interspersed with thorn scrub and ponds, are likely to yield widespread birds like Western Cattle Egret, Striated Heron, Black, Turkey and Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures, Snail Kite, Savanna and Roadside Hawks, Southern Crested-Caracara, Wattled Jacana, Southern Lapwing, Smooth-billed Ani, Fork-tailed Palm-Swift, Ringed Kingfisher, Yellow-throated Spinetail, the lovely Masked Water-Tyrant, the endearing White-headed Marsh-Tyrant and Grey-breasted Martin. During the journey we will enter the caatinga proper and observe some of its typical inhabitants such as Caatinga Cacholote and Capped Seedeater.

Day 5 Today we will concentrate on finding the endemics and specialities of the fabulous forests of the Floresta Nacional de Chapada do Araripe. This fascinating reserve protects some

splendid stands of bizarre, stunted and very dense, partly-deciduous woodland. Wide sandy tracks cut through this low-canopy forest, where our main target is the enigmatic and endemic Great Xenops. This striking and monotypic species (genus *Megaxenops*) is restricted to the caatinga woodland of northeastern Brazil. With a modicum of luck we should be able to admire this bright rufous furnariid with its gleaming white throat whilst it gleans tree trunks or pries off pieces of bark with its upturned, cleaver-like bill, often while accompanying a mixed flock of understory birds. Shy endemic White-browed Guans will play hide and seek with us and we will make a special effort to get to grips with that egg on legs, the diminutive endemic White-browed Antpitta. It was formerly lumped in Speckle-breasted Antpitta of southeastern Brazil and northeastern Argentina, but has very different plumage characteristics and vocalizations. Our attention will also be drawn to the bizarre nasal calls of the drably-hued Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin and to marauding flocks of White-naped Jays. A rufous flash in the subcanopy should reveal the whereabouts of the dainty, endemic Ash-throated Casiornis. Other birds here include three more endemics, Caatinga Antwren, Grey-eyed Greenlet (a recent split from Rufous-crowned) and Long-billed Wren, as well as Pauraque, Glittering-bellied and Glittering-throated Emeralds, Blue-crowned Trogon, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Olivaceous Woodcreeper (of the distinctive rufous race *reiseri*), Bearded Bellbird (with its arresting and resounding calls), Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Southern Beardless and Mouse-coloured Tyrannulets, Forest and Grey Elaenias, Grey-crowned, Bran-coloured, Fuscous, Swainson's, Short-crested, Brown-crested, Variegated and Piratic Flycatchers, Great Kiskadee, Southern Rough-winged Swallow and Flavescent Warbler. Imposing red and grey cliffs surround the isolated plateau of the Chapada do Araripe and at the base of these lives one of the most spectacular members of the manakin family. The Araripe Manakin was described only a few years ago and has an extremely small area of distribution, limited to the lush growth at the base of this escarpment. The total population of this cracking species must be minute. The adult males with their gleaming white bodies, ebony-black wings and cardinal-red heads have to be seen to be believed and we will make a concerted effort to observe this threatened species.

Day 6 Dawn will find us in the lower foothills of the Chapada do



Araripe Manakin (Nik Borrow)

Araripe, where long-bladed terrestrial bromeliads and cacti (ranging in size from tiny stumps to tall columns or even massive tangled plants as large as trees) create a weird-looking habitat. In this scorched and xeromorphic landscape we will search for the little-known Red-shouldered Spinetail. This distinctive species with its crane-like song has been put in a genus of its own (*Cyalophylax*) and is restricted to the arid interior of northeastern Brazil. The endemic, harlequin-patterned Silvery-cheeked Antshrike also favours this peculiar habitat. We will then cross most of the state of Pernambuco on our drive south to the town of Petrolina, situated on the north bank of the Rio São Francisco, for an overnight stay. This famous river, whose source lies far away in the magnificent Serra da Canastra in southwestern Minas Gerais, is the only river in the northeast that never runs dry! The rocky terrain, the dense thorny scrub, the numerous cacti and the parched winds are typical of the Pernambucan sertão, for most of the year a scorched landscape under a relentless sun. This is cattle country par excellence, where the local 'vaqueiros' have tended their herds since the 17th century. We should pick up a fair selection of birds today, including some water-loving species as the dry scrubland is regularly interspersed with marshes, small lakes and ephemeral ponds. Likely candidates include the endemic Stripe-breasted Starthroat, the little-known White-naped Xenopsaris and the aberrant, icterid-like, endemic Scarlet-throated Tanager (which may in fact turn out not to be a tanager at all), as well as Pied-billed Grebe, Snowy and Great Egrets, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Brazilian Teal, Short-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel,

Purple and Spot-flanked Gallinules, Limpkin, Solitary Sandpiper, Eared Dove, Common, Picui and Ruddy Ground-Doves, Guira Cuckoo (comical-looking and vocal creatures that are often found in loose groups), Striped Cuckoo (more often heard than seen), Black-backed Water-Tyrant, Cattle Tyrant, White-winged Swallow, Ultramarine Grosbeak, and White-browed and Chopi Blackbirds. We will stay out until dark and try to get good views of the diminutive Least Nighthawk.

Day 7 Today we will cross the mighty Rio São Francisco and enter the huge state of Bahia. We will drive east along a bumpy road traversing wide expanses of caatinga habitat, eventually reaching the small town of Jeremoabo for an overnight stay. At dawn the whistles of Small-billed Tinamou and the piping calls of Spot-backed Puffbirds, joined by the more croaky songs of Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrants and Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrants, will emanate from this enchanting habitat. Exuberant Caatinga Cacholotes will show off from their enormous nests high up in the taller bushes and attractive Black-bellied Antwrens will utter their strophes from inside thorny shrubs. Other species to look for today include the endemic White-throated Seedeater and the endemic Campo Troupial, as well as the secretive White-bellied Nothura, Comb Duck, Crane Hawk, Aplomado Falcon, Grey-necked Wood-Rail, Picazuro Pigeon, the endemic Caatinga Parakeet, Blue-winged Parrotlet, Dark-billed Cuckoo, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Burrowing Owl, the superb Swallow-tailed Hummingbird, Amazon Kingfisher, Barred Antshrike (here a race with red eyes!), Stripe-backed

Antbird (a terrestrial species with two widely separated populations: one in the chaco of Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina and one in the caatinga of northeastern Brazil), Lesser and Greater Wagtail-Tyrants (both represented by isolated forms in this area and both likely candidates for splitting), Southern Scrub-Flycatcher, Chalk-browed Mockingbird, Tropical Gnatcatcher, Grassland Sparrow, Pileated Finch and Bay-winged Cowbird. In the afternoon we will arrive in the Lear's Macaw area, close to the federal reserve of Estação Ecológica do Raso da Catarina, where most of the remaining 250 or so birds live and breed. In 1978 Helmut Sick, one of the best known Brazilian ornithologists, finally tracked down this enigmatic bird to this area. This magnificent species had been known from collections and occasional birds that appeared in the pet trade, but nobody really knew where these birds had come from. The expedition mounted by Sick to this inhospitable area (shown as white on maps until only recently) found them breeding here in the sandstone cliffs. This species is now one of the rarest birds in the world and makes a living in this rugged dry terrain clad with thorn scrub and Licuri palms (*Syagrus coronata*), the nuts of which are its main food source. We will spend several hours in an open, park-like area, hopefully enjoying good views of these exquisite birds, but we will also keep our eyes open for Tataupa Tinamou, Pearl Kite, Yellow-headed Caracara, Laughing Falcon, the stately Red-legged Seriema, Blue-winged Macaw, Blue-crowned Parakeet, Turquoise-fronted Parrot, Green-barred Woodpecker, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Campo Suiriri, the delightful White Monjita, and Hooded and White-lined Tanagers.

Day 8 The early hours of the day will be spent in an area of gallery woodland where we should find the endemic Pectoral Antwren. This very localized and distinctive member of the genus *Herpsilochmus* is dependent on this fast disappearing habitat. Later we will drive to the distant town of Palmares in coastal Pernambuco for a three nights stay.

Days 9-10 During our first full day we will explore some remnant patches of Atlantic Forest in search of several of Northeast Brazil's most exceptional endemic birds. The extremely localized White-collared Kite is a close relative of the widespread Grey-headed Kite and has a total population of fewer than 50 pairs, making it one of the rarest birds of prey in the world. Recent research has revealed more about this species' behaviour,

although the nest remains unknown. With a modicum of luck we will be able to witness the antics of this really special bird. Where the forest edge meets the sugar cane plantations we may chance upon a flock of the uncommon Forbes's Blackbird, an endemic that looks very much like the more common Chopi Blackbird. We will also hope to locate the endemic Yellow-faced Siskin, while in the dense undergrowth we should find the localized Willis's Antbird. If we are extremely lucky we will encounter the recently-described Pernambuco Pygmy-Owl.

One of the more important remaining patches of Atlantic Forest is now protected under the name of Frei Caneca and on our second full day we will explore this reserve in depth. This relatively small area is totally surrounded by sugarcane plantations and cattle ranches. The attractive Orange-bellied Antwren (described as recently as 1983) is restricted to the state of Alagoas and flits about in the highest part of the canopy. The very poorly-known Alagoas (or Novaes's) Foliage-gleaner (also described as recently as 1983) can be located by its raucous calls, but is exceedingly rare and we would need a large dose of luck to encounter one. The Long-tailed (or Alagoas) Tyrannulet was described only in 1987 and is yet another Alagoas endemic which leads a quiet existence in the mid-strata of these forests. Other species we hope to find here include Grey-fronted Dove, Black Jacobin, the endemic Long-tailed Woodnymph, Channel-billed Toucan, Golden-spangled Piculet, Red-stained Woodpecker and White-eyed Tody-Tyrant. A new species of pygmy-tyrant of the genus *Myiornis* was recently discovered here and still awaits formal description.

Day 11 After some final birding in the forest at Frei Caneca we will drive to União dos Palmares, not far north of Maceió, the capital of Alagoas state, for a two nights stay. In the late afternoon we will have another taste of the richness of the Atlantic Forest as we explore a small patch of this endangered habitat. We stand an excellent chance of finding the spectacular endemic Seven-coloured Tanager, which is usually encountered travelling in small parties along the forest edge in search of fruiting trees. The supporting cast may include Black-breasted Mango, Sombre Hummingbird, Common Thornbird, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, the glorious Green-backed Becard and Yellow-backed Tanager.

Days 12 Several ridges clad in dense evergreen forest have been preserved

as a reserve near the village of Murici. Everywhere else in the region, cattle raising and sugarcane production have taken a heavy toll and so these woods are like fertile islands in a sterile sea. Protection is only partial, so the future of these reserves is still a question mark. These woods, which can be difficult of access after heavy rain, harbour some of the most localized and threatened birds in South America and several species new to science have been described from here in the last 20 years. Some of these we should already have located in the reserve of Frei Caneca, but here we have a better chance to find the unobtrusive Alagoas Antwren. This member of the large genus *Myrmotherula* was described in 1979 and makes a living in the dense mid-canopy. We will have to get up very early to reach this splendid habitat before the sun rises. The dawn chorus is dominated by the bubbling trills of Cinereous Antshrikes, the penetrating whistles of White-backed Fire-eyes, the loud ringing and unmistakable song of Screaming Pihas and the monotonous voices of Long-billed Gnatwrens. Colourful endemic Jandaya Parakeets inspect promising-looking holes in dead stumps and endemic Black-headed Berryeaters may perch on exposed branches. Rare and localized Pinto's Spinetails and Scalloped Antbirds grovel about in the undergrowth, where the tiny endemic Black-cheeked Gnatcatcher perches close to the ground. Firecracker-like snaps and whistled 'weeo' calls betray a large lek of pied White-bearded Manakins, whilst nearby their Red-headed and Blue-backed relatives display in a more discrete way. Other species we may well add to our tally include three more endemics, Plain Parakeet, the adorable Scaled Antbird and the gorgeous Rufous-headed Tanager, plus Little Tinamou, Zone-tailed Hawk, Rufous-breasted Hermit, White-chinned Sapphire, Lineated Woodpecker, White-eyed Foliage-gleaner, Plain Xenops, White-flanked and Rufous-winged Antwrens, Long-tailed Tyrant, Olivaceous Flatbill, Greyish and Thrush-like Mourners, White-winged Becard, Chestnut-vented Conebill, Flame-crested and Opal-rumped Tanagers, Violaceous Euphonia, Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers, Yellow-green Grosbeak and Red-rumped Cacique. Skittish Black-rumped Agoutis can often be found shuffling about the woodland floor.

Day 13 After some final birding in the Murici area we will continue southwards to Estancia in coastal Sergipe state for an overnight stay.

Day 14 Dawn will find us in a lovely patch of remnant Atlantic Forest

where we have a good chance of encountering the endemic, little-known and extremely localized Fringe-backed Fire-eye. This is now one of the rarest and probably most threatened antbirds in eastern Brazil. An exciting supporting cast may well consist of the endemic Sooretama Slaty Antshrike, Stripe-necked Tody-Tyrant and the spectacular endemic White-winged Cotinga. Later we will drive inland to the Chapada Diamantina for a two nights stay near Lençóis. We should find White-cheeked Pintail, White-tailed Kite, Black-necked Stilt and Rufous Hornero during the journey.

Day 15 The Chapada Diamantina is an area where geological forces have created deep valleys and rocky ridges, and the locality derives its name from the diamonds that were once found here. The higher reaches offer spectacular 'western-style' scenery with huge, isolated rocky outcrops, steep cliff faces and grassy expanses. This rock-strewn, scrub-covered escarpment is one of the few accessible spots where that remarkable hummingbird, the Hooded Visorbearer can be seen. This bronzy-green marvel of a bird displays a glittering-green throat adorned with a fiery red spot and is restricted to this small area of interior Bahia. Investigation of this restricted habitat should also yield localized species like Grey-backed Tachuri and Buff-throated Pampa-Finch. We may also find King Vulture, the impressive Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, South American Snipe, White-vented Violetear, White-eared Puffbird, the handsome Collared Crescentchest, Plain-crested and Highland Elaenias, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Blue-and-white Swallow, Hooded Siskin, Cinnamon Tanager, Lowland Hepatic-Tanager, Black-throated Saltator and the enchanting Rock Cavy (which looks rather like a hyrax). At lower altitudes evergreen forest is to be found. Here, flocks of squabbling Scaly-headed Parrots cruise by and Biscutate Swifts zoom past. Yellow-legged Tinamous call tantalizingly from the undergrowth, but are devilishly-hard to see. Our main target species in this habitat is the delightful Spotted Piculet, but if we are lucky we will also encounter the heavily-trapped Golden-capped Parakeet. Other birds we hope to observe include the raucous Speckled Chachalaca, Pale-vented Pigeon, Violet-capped Woodnymph, Versicoloured Emerald, Surucua Trogon, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Streaked Xenops, White-shouldered Fire-eye, Yellow Tyrannulet, Greenish Elaenia, Eastern Sirystes, Black-tailed Tityra and Green-winged Saltator.



Swallow-tailed Cotinga (Nik Borrow)

Day 16 After some final birding we will drive southwards to the southern reaches of the Chapada Diamantina for an overnight stay. Our main target here will be the endemic Sincora Antwren, a close relative of the Rusty-backed Antwren and only first described in 2007, which favours rocky montane scrub ('campo rupestre'). We should also find the perky endemic São Francisco Sparrow, which was only described in 1997 and which usually leads a quiet life in the undergrowth of dense woodland.

Day 17 Early this morning we will go in search of another species described as recently as 2007, the Diamantina Tapaculo. Restricted to the Chapada Diamantina area, it lives in dense shrubbery at higher elevations. The species is closely related to the taxonomically complex *Scytalopus speluncae* (Mouse-coloured Tapaculo) group. Later in the day we will drive southeastwards through arid caatinga to the little town of Boa Nova for a three nights stay. Most of the species we will see today should have been encountered before, but we will of course stop for anything worthwhile.

Days 18-19 The famous Boa Nova area is a transition zone between the dry thorny scrub, known as caatinga, and the Atlantic tropical forest that once used to cover most of the southeastern Brazilian coastal hill ranges, but of which only a small patch remains in the Boa Nova district. We will visit two very different habitats, each with its assortment of very distinctive species. The dry, semi-deciduous, low-canopy woodland with its numerous lianas, vine tangles and large terrestrial

bromeliads is known as 'mata-de-cipo' (vine forest) and holds some extremely rare and localized antbirds. The handsome Slender Antbird is only found where these bizarre, sharp-edged bromeliads (of the genus *Aechmea*) grow in profusion on the sandy soil. This endemic of southern interior Bahia is usually not too hard to see well and is readily detected by its shrill song. It was only known from three old specimens until it was rediscovered here in 1974. More arboreal, but almost as rare, is the lovely Narrow-billed Antwren, which gleans in foliage and along limbs. Attractive Caatinga Antwrens always seem to be on the move and tiny Hangnest Tody-Tyrants utter their fast call from a hidden perch in a tangle. Just a few kilometres further east the scenery changes dramatically as, in valleys and on slopes that catch more moisture from the oceanic winds, we encounter a much lush kind of forest with taller and thicker trees and a much less dense understorey. Here we will try to locate several more members of the marvellous antbird family, including the tangle-loving Spot-backed Antshrike, the exquisite Tufted Antshrike, Spot-breasted Antvireo, the poorly-known Rio de Janeiro Antbird, the endemic Ferruginous and Ochre-rumped Antbirds, and the dapper endemic White-bibbed Antbird. We will also try to get to grips with the secretive endemic Bahia Spinetail. The fierce-looking Least Pygmy-Owl often attracts a mobbing band of hummers and tanagers, while at night we will try to catch a Variable Screech-Owl in the spotlight beam. Other species which can be expected here include such endemics as the endearing

Frisled Coquette, Crescent-chested Puffbird, Yellow-eared Woodpecker, Pallid Spinetail, the localized Striated Softtail, White-collared Foliage-gleaner, Yellow-lored Tody-Flycatcher, Oustalet's Tyrannulet, the vociferous Grey-hooded Attila and Gilt-edged Tanager. Species of wider distribution include Reddish-bellied Parakeet, Scale-throated Hermit, Sapphire-spangled Emerald, Black-eared Fairy, Black-throated Trogon, Swallow-wing, Black-necked Aracari, Yellow-throated Woodpecker (confusingly represented here by a red-throated race), Plain-winged, White-throated and Scaled Woodcreepers, the amazing Black-billed Scythebill, Ochre-breasted and Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaners, the remarkable Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper, the aberrant Sharpbill, Swallow-tailed Manakin, the superb Pin-tailed Manakin, Drab-breasted Bamboo-Tyrant, the diminutive Eared Pygmy-Tyrant, Tropical Pewee, Greenish Mourner, Chestnut-crowned Becard, White-necked and Cocoa Thrushes, Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, Black-goggled and Golden-chevroned Tanagers, and Chestnut-bellied and Golden-rumped Euphonias. We should hear mega skulkers like Brown Tinamou, the endemic Such's Anthrush and Variegated Antpitta, although seeing any of these would be a bonus. If we are really lucky we will observe the endemic Mantled Hawk or a party of beautiful Swallow-tailed Cotingas. A nearby area of marshy terrain holds treasures like Rufous-sided Crake and Blackish Rail, as well as Campo Flicker, Pale-legged Hornero, Brown-chested Martin and White-bellied Seed eater, while in fruiting bushes at the forest edge we will hope for dazzling Brazilian and Green-headed Tanagers.

Day 20 This morning we will make our way towards the southeast. The Pink-legged Graveteiro was only discovered in 1994 (and first described in 1996) and during our journey today we have a good chance to see this bizarre, aberrant little furnariid, which builds its bulky nests in epiphyte-laden trees shading cocoa plantations and which lives an acrobatic life in the highest part of the canopy. After a hearty lunch at a local restaurant we will continue to a private reserve in the Ilheus region of coastal Bahia for a two nights stay.

Day 21 In the well preserved restinga forest of this private reserve we hope to encounter several more restricted range species. Here in this dense and tangled forest, which grows on sandy soil, we will listen for the distinctive calls of the Bahia Tapaculo. This species was until recently only known from three specimens taken at two

localities in coastal Bahia, but it has now been found at several other sites, where it favours patches of flooded vegetation. The tiny endemic Bahia Antwren is a very localized species that is restricted to coastal Bahia and which is not uncommon here. We should also encounter the endemic Band-tailed Antwren and the endemic Eastern Striped Manakin.

Day 22 We will have another chance to look for these specialities this morning before driving to Salvador for an overnight stay.

Day 23 Today we will visit a nearby estuary with areas of mangroves where we may well find the localized Plain-bellied Emerald, as well as Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Clapper Rail, Spotted Sandpiper and Bicoloured Conebill. Surrounding scrub and grassland hold the secretive Russet-crowned Crake, Cinereous-breasted Spinetail, Rufous-winged Antshrike and Orange-headed Tanager. In the evening we will board our flight bound for London via Lisbon.

Day 24 Afternoon arrival at London.

Accommodation & Road Transport: The hotels are mostly of normal Birdquest standard. The hotel at Canudos is fairly simple and some rooms have shared bathrooms. The guesthouse at Boa Nova is very simple, but most rooms have private bathrooms. Road transport is by minibus and roads are mostly good.

Walking: The walking effort is easy in most areas, but there are a few harder walks.

Climate: At this season it should be mostly dry and sunny. It is generally hot and humid in the lowlands and foothills. At higher altitudes daytime temperatures are pleasant, but it can get quite cold at night or when it rains.

Bird Photography: Opportunities are worthwhile overall.

Tour Price: 2009: £5240, €6812, \$9956 London/London (or £4380, €5694, \$8322 Fortaleza/Salvador). Based on 5 or more participants.

Single Room Supplement: £440, €572, \$836.

Basic Deposit: £550, €715, \$1045.

Supplementary Deposit (for those arranging international air travel through us, due 12 months prior to departure): £850, €1105, \$1615.