

Brazil

Atlantic Forest Special

Friday 03 September – Sunday 12 September 2010

Saturday 11 September – Monday 20 September 2010

Leaders: Colin Bushell and local guides

2010 Cost **£2,199** single room supplement **£50**



Brazil is one of the world's most exciting birding destinations. Its huge size and diverse range of habitats enable it to harbour a staggering 1,700 bird species, nearly 200 of them only found in Brazil. The coastal forests in the southeast of the country have been seriously depleted over the last two centuries with less than 7% of the original cover remaining, much of it fragmented. These Atlantic Forests are important refuges for bird species, once widespread here before the impact of man on the landscape. REGUA (Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu) protects one of the last stands of tropical rainforest left in the severely depleted Atlantic Rainforest, or Mata Atlântica, in Brazil. REGUA's primary objective is to protect the remaining forest and biodiversity from deforestation, hunting and over-extraction of natural resources. We are indeed fortunate to be able to spend our one-centre tour here, travelling out to various sites to bolster the impressive list of birds (currently around 435 species) available at the reserve.

The Guapiaçu Bird Lodge is ideally situated for our requirements with birding on our doorstep. Green-headed and Ruby-crowned Tanagers, Blond-crested Woodpecker, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird and Chestnut-backed Antshrike may be found in the borders of the garden. There are many trails accessed by foot or after a short ride in the vehicle and we will see a great variety of Atlantic Forest endemic birds which may include White-necked and Mantled Hawks, Crescent-chested Puffbird, Rufous-capped Motmot, Pin-tailed Manakin, Bare-throated Bellbird, Spot-billed Toucanet, several dazzling tanagers and with luck the rare Elegant Mourner (Shrike-like Cotinga). After a great day in the field we can relax with a Caipirinha (a delicious Brazilian cocktail) outside the lodge with the sound of rails and crakes ringing out from the wetland bordering the forest. There is even a swimming pool if you want to cool off that way. Journey with Colin, our South American specialist, on this tour into the Atlantic Forests of south-east Brazil.

ITINERARY

Days 1 to 8

We leave London on a scheduled overnight flight to Rio de Janeiro. We arrive into Rio de Janeiro in the morning and we are met by our driver and are transferred to Guapiaçu Bird Lodge in the REGUA reserve. The journey takes approximately an hour and a half and, as we near REGUA, we can stop for our first Brazilian birds. Staying at the lodge throughout this tour our program will be flexible, but will include birding in the forest and wetlands nearby, as well as some excursions by minibus.

REGUA boasts a bird-rich wetland within easy reach of the lodge, in fact many of the roosting egrets can be seen from the lodge grounds and rails and crakes can be heard from the garden. This habitat provides us with a nice gentle introduction to REGUA's avifauna on our day of arrival and quality birds may include Masked Duck, Capped Heron, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Slaty-breasted Wood-Rail, Blackish Rail, Rufous-sided Crake, three species of kingfisher, Wing-banded Hornero, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant and Masked Yellowthroat. The route to the wetland along the forest borders provides an opportunity for us to become acquainted with some of the more common Atlantic Forest endemics such as Yellow-lored Tody-Flycatcher, Long-billed Wren and the stunning Brazilian Tanager. We will linger a while in patches of forest, listening intently for the repetitive song of the handsome Crescent-chested Puffbird, a species found only in the Atlantic Forests of Brazil and quite numerous here. In the more open areas we will scan the sky for Black Hawk-Eagle or Grey-headed Kite and listen for passing flocks of Orange-winged Parrots. In the evening we may see Pauraque, Tawny-browed Owl or Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl near the lodge.

Some days involve spending a little bit more time away from the lodge with a packed lunch. The Waterfall Trail is worthy of almost a full day with the reward of taking lunch overlooking a spectacular waterfall deep in the heart of REGUA's forest. We stop at a few feeders in a clearing on the way,



Blue-winged Macaw

where we should see Violet-capped Woodnymph and Saw-billed Hermits, before entering the forest trail where we may encounter our first Rufous-breasted Leaf-tosser and Blue Manakin. The stands of bamboo here are the haunt of the Slaty Bristlefront, a strange ground-dwelling tapaculo that sometimes struts into view like a miniature clockwork chicken. Deep sided banks are the breeding sites of Rufous-capped Motmot so we can linger a while in any suitable places for this rather unobtrusive species. The path passes through a few small clearings where Spot-billed Toucanets can sometimes be seen and the loud clanging song of Bare-throated Bellbirds are heard over the distant forest canopy. Slowly but surely we can begin to increase our bird list as each corner and recess reveals different Atlantic Forest specialities. Star-throated Antwrens scold from the undergrowth while overhead the distinctive song

of the Spot-backed Antshrike can be detected as this range-restricted species manoeuvres through the vine tangles above us. Pin-tailed Manakin, Surucua Trogon, Spot-breasted Antwren, Streak-capped Antwren, Plain-winged Woodcreeper and Brassy-breasted and Red-necked Tanagers can all be seen on this trail if we find a mixed feeding flock. However one species – the Elegant Mourner (Shrike-like Cotinga) is almost a REGUA speciality, being located more often at this site than anywhere else. We will make an effort to see this rare bird and we are bound to chance upon many other spectacular birds here with Black-cheeked Gnatcatcher, Buff-bellied Puffbird, Scaled Antbird, White-shouldered Fire-eye, Pale-browed Treehunter, Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper and Grey-hooded Attila all likely. The rare Russet-winged Spadebill is often seen along this trail too. We usually arrive back at the lodge in the late



Surucua Trogon

afternoon after our walk on the Waterfall Trail and after dinner and a refreshing Caipirinha there may be an optional night walk if the weather permits. REGUA is a great place to see the poorly known Giant Snipe so we will take a walk out to the grasslands nearby. Other birds we may find after dark include Scissor-tailed and Spot-tailed Nightjars and Striped Owl.

In order to increase the diversity of species recorded during the tour we can make a couple of outings into the nearby foothills. The strange song of the Black-and-gold Cotinga will resonate throughout the uplands if conditions are favourable and we will spend some time scanning the canopy for this Brazilian endemic. Rarer still, the Grey-winged Cotinga has been found recently nearby and if local news is positive regarding this species we may well try our luck one day. The Itatiaia Thistle-tail, Plovercrest and Large-tailed Antshrike can be seen in the same area so there's always something to search for in the highlands frequented by these rare cotingas.

One trip by minibus will involve visiting a valley with dry forest in search of the rare Three-toed Jacamar. The arid environment is in stark contrast to the more humid forest near our lodge, but supports a different suite of birds nonetheless. Travelling through the grassland landscape we can look for the weird Red-legged Seriemas that roam the open areas, sometimes in pairs or small groups of three or four birds. Blue-winged Macaw, White-eyed Parakeet, White-eared Puffbird, Red-eyed Thornbird, Firewood-gatherer and White-rumped Monjita can all be seen in fields or scrub not too far from the roadside. If we find a damper area we will search for the spectacular Streamer-tailed Tyrant.

The spectacular Serra dos Órgãos National Park is the home to many birds difficult or not possible to see at REGUA. Set in mountainous country the scenery is spectacular and the park includes lowland and highland Atlantic Forest. Birds we will hope to see today include Dusky-legged Guan, Maroon-bellied Parakeet, White-throated Hummingbird, Brazilian Ruby, Black-throated Trogon, Yellow-eared and Yellow-browed Woodpeckers, Bertoni's and Ochre-rumped Antwren, Pallid Spinetail, White-browed Foliage-Gleaner, Sharp-billed Treehunter, Brassy-breasted Tanager and White-browed Warbler.

The Atlantic Forest region is rich in bird endemism but they are not all restricted to tall, humid forest. The Restinga Antwren is a threatened species inhabiting the coastal scrub (Restinga) not far from Rio de Janeiro. As with other Atlantic Forest habitats Restinga has been drastically reduced, with less than 10% of the original cover remaining. Urban development, for holiday homes is the main threat to the survival of this strange habitat with its cacti, ferns, bromeliads and palms. During our outing we will visit some coastal lagoons where we may see a variety of water-associated species like White-cheeked Pintail, Roseate Spoonbill and maybe some transient waders. Other birds frequenting the Restinga apart from the antwren include Hangnest Tody-Tyrant and Sooretama Slaty-Antshrike.

Days 9 & 10

After a final morning birdwatching in the REGUA reserve we leave for the airport at Rio de Janeiro, where we catch our return evening flight to London arriving the following morning.



REGUA

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Depart London
- Days 2-8** REGUA
- Day 9** Depart Rio de Janeiro
- Day 10** Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of nine clients

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms with private facilities.

Transport

By minibus

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

- Good
- 250
- Mainly Hot
- Low
- Special
- Moderate
- Good
- Moderate
- Scheduled



Three-toed Jacamar