

Birding Bahia – 22 April – 10 May 2019

A plan to spend a week on the amazing beaches of Morro de Sao Paulo and Boipeba quickly led to thoughts of birding a little in Bahia, which quickly grew to a plan for a full circuit of Bahia and a bit of Espirito Santo. I flew into and out of Salvador, though given the long distances involved, I might have rather paid the higher cost of a one way rental and done the trip as a one way finishing in Vitoria (in Espirito Santo). The old city of Salvador is pretty and is worth a few hours visit though take care, despite being 100m from a couple of police officers we still got a phone snatched out of our hands. Just an inconvenience, but worth mentioning that even in the tourist filled and highly policed old city at mid day, it can still happen. Morro de Sao Paulo and Boipeba are islands reached by ferry from Salvador or from a couple spots on the mainland south of Salvador. They are gorgeous and relaxing and quite safe. Overall some of the most enjoyable beaches I've ever been to when factoring in nice, cheap accommodation, amazing food, good vibe, and great, clean beaches. Tap water is basically non-potable in Brazil, but I was able to almost entirely avoid buying water and all of the associated plastic waste. Approximately half of the places I stayed had readily visible / obvious water filters or dispensers. At most other places if I asked they would fill my bottles or I could go into the kitchen and fill them. Only a couple places didn't have filtered water. Many larger gas stations along the highways also had free filtered chilled water from wall mounted dispensers.

Morro de Sao Paulo/Boipeba don't hold any really noteworthy birds though Plain-bellied Emerald is easy enough to find in the Mangroves and seaside scrub, and I turned up Ochre-backed Woodpecker in a mixed flock on Boipeba. Little Wood-Rail and Mangrove Rail are probably around and I tried for them a few times in likely spots but had no responses to playback anywhere.

The real birding began after finishing up on the beaches and picking up a rental car from Localiza (the largest Brazilian car rental company, owned by Hertz). Their prices are just a little above local companies but they are big with good support and a new fleet, and car rental in Brazil is very affordable – I paid approximately \$15 US / day for a compact Ford that was in perfect shape and proved comfortable and reliable.

Once out of Salvador, Bahia was scenic, relaxed, easy to navigate, easy to find inexpensive hotels, easy to get decent food, and features a lot of long drives. I speak decent Portuguese which certainly helps but is by no means necessary, I wouldn't hesitate to travel in Brazil with Google Translate and Google Maps, it's an easy country, logistically, in my opinion. I had Brazil maps downloaded for the MAPS.ME app, all of the areas I was going downloaded as offline areas in Google Maps, offline translating for Portuguese in Google Translate downloaded, and had zero problems. Along most of the regional highways you encounter fuel and buffet lunches that cater to truckers and travelers with good frequency, I never worried about when I would find gas or lunch. Most of my meals in the buffets were surprisingly good even for a vegetarian with a good selection of salads, rice, beans, potatoes and veggies. I would say Bahia is as good as Argentina in terms of being able to eat healthily and reasonably well as a vegetarian in South America, much better than Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, or Chile.

Here is a list of destinations in the order I visited them:

Fazenda Campina – just north of Salvador, one of the best sites for Fringe-backed Fire-eye, which is easy here.

Estação Biológico Canudos – the Lear's Macaw reserve, a good way to the north, could also be added to a NE Brazil itinerary about as easily as to a Bahia itinerary.

PN Chapada Diamantina – Incredibly scenic, and a good handful of endemics and specialty birds make this one of the must do and most enjoyable destinations in Bahia

Bom Jesus da Lapa – if you're going to Caetité it is not that much further and gets your Bahian Nighthawk.

Caetité – a bit of a drive but a good site for Minas Gerais Tyrannulet, "Wagler's" Scaled Woodcreeper, and a good selection of dry forest birds that overlap with the dry side of Boa Nova.

Boa Nova – a classic site, several endemics and specials make this a must do stop in Bahia.

Estação Veracel – another classic site with a stack of endemics / specials.

RN Vale do Rio Doce (Linhares) – a long drive south in Espírito Santo, a great place to stay and great birding. Basically the only site for Red-billed Curassow and Minute Hermit.

Mata dos Caetes – further south in Espírito Santo, the site for Cherry-throated Tanager but has lots of other great birds and is a lovely patch of forest.

Reserva Serra Bonita – back in S Bahia, loaded with endemics and specials makes this another classic site. It is a lovely place, one of the most enjoyable destinations of my trip.

Itubera / Michelin Forest – site for Bahia Tapaculo and perhaps "Margaretta's" Great-billed Hermit though I dipped the latter.

Instead of a day by day here's more detail about the sites and the logistics of each site:

Fazenda Campina – It is not clear to me how to access the actual Fazenda but there is a publicly accessible road that transects the edge of the forest patch where the Fire-eye is readily found. I parked at -12.4395, -38.4284. From there you walk a couple hundred meters of the road crossing cutover / agricultural areas before entering forest. After a couple hundred meters in scrubby / lower regenerating forest you enter taller/older forest and **Fringe-backed Fire-eye** is easy to find. I also found **Sooretama Slaty-Antshrike**, **Bahia Antwren**, and a selection of Atlantic Forest birds at their northernmost extreme here. You can get to the start of the road in a regular 2WD either from Pojuca or from the east off of route 110/420. I stayed in Pojuca which had a couple basic hotels and food, and birded the forest patch for a couple hours before starting the long drive to Canudos.

Between Fazenda Campina and Canudos there are stakeouts for **Pectoral Antwren** along the 235 between Jeremoabo and Canudos, see eBird for locations. I put in nearly 2 hours effort and dipped, which surprised me as *Herpsilochmus* Antwrens are usually not terribly hard to connect with.

Also, around the town of Canudos, wherever you are at dusk you can probably readily see **Least Nighthawk** if you find a bit of a view over the vegetation and scan around. I saw about 10 from the road without much effort.

Estação Biológico Canudos – Arrange your visit ahead of time by emailing or calling. Their website is <http://www.biodiversitas.org.br/canudos/>. I initially didn't get a response to my emails so I called and they gave me an email address to send a message to directly, which was glaucia@biodiversitas.org.br. I was asked to meet Tania, the woman in charge of the actual station, in the town of Canudos “in front of the church.” This is at -9.8970, -39.0271. Having a local SIM card for your cel phone will be very useful here to coordinate your arrival (via a call or WhatsApp) and meet Tania. I had no problems, then had dinner in town before being shown the way out to the station. In the morning you go with the ranger to the viewing area and enjoy about two hours at dawn watching the **Lear's Macaws**, which was a fantastic experience in a gorgeous location. I saw a **Little Nightjar** just before dawn and heard **Small-billed Tinamou** at the viewing area but they were distant. Other than that I mostly just enjoyed the Macaws and didn't bird much. Then you return for a huge breakfast around 8AM. After breakfast I picked a likely spot on the road a few hundred meters from the station and quickly found **Ruby-topaz Hummingbird**, “**Caatinga**” **Barred Antshrike**, **Silvery-cheeked Antshrike**, **Red-shouldered Spinetail**, “**Bahia**” **Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant**, **Long-billed Wren**, **White-throated Seedeater** and more.

I left Canudos mid-late morning for the long drive to Chapada Diamantina

Chapada Diamantina – Lencois – There are several areas to bird here – the wetter forest on the east side of the Chapada, quite close to Lencois, the famous hill **Morro do Pai Inacio**, the scrubby rocky hillsides just east of Morro do Pai Inacio for Sincora Antwren, and the Palmeiras area which is further west of Morro do Pai Inacio. I spent a first full day birding the wet forest, then looking for Sincora Antwren, then enjoying Morro do Pai Inacio. To bird the wetter forest I parked at about -12.5497, -41.3614 and walked the road. **Yellow-legged Tinamou** is vocal and I heard several but none close enough to the road to try to go after. I found **Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin** without too many problems and easily added **Planalto Slaty-Antshrike**, **Black-capped Antwren**, **White-naped Jay** and more before cutting it short and continuing up into the Chapada. I tried some dirt tracks around -12.4747, -41.4548 for Sincora Antwren with no luck and few birds overall. Then I drove back east, decided that the “Antwren Bridge” has way too much traffic to try to bird, so I parked a bit further along at approximately -12.4687, -41.4424, jumped over some tall grass beside the road, and scrambled around the rocky hillsides until I found a pair of **Sincora Antwrens** at -12.4691, -41.4418 as well as a female **Hooded Visorbearer**. From here I headed to **Morro do Pai Inacio**, turnoff at -12.4593, -41.4781. I birded the entrance track for some time, turning up **Rufous-winged Antshrike**, **Collared Crescentchest**, and **Pale-throated Pampa-Finch** (aka Serra Finch). I then drove to the end of the track, paid the nominal entry fee, and hiked up the short but steep trail to the top of the hill. About halfway up I wandered out onto the flat rocky area (approx. -12.4571, -41.4729) and found a male **Hooded Visorbearer** with no problem. I could also hear Stripe-tailed Yellow-Finch here but it was distant. I continued to the top of the Morro and found **Velvety Black-Tyrant** and **Stripe-tailed Yellow-Finch** by wandering around the awesome Dr Seuss looking landscape for 20 minutes or so. With some time left in the day I headed back to the wetter forest closer to Lencois, parking in the same area. I didn't add anything new before dusk, and after dusk looked for Nightjars and Owls a bit, the only interesting bird being a heard-only **Black-capped Screech-Owl**. Lencois is a cute town with a lot of options to stay and eat. I stayed at Pousada Casa da Geleia. The owners are kind and provided a pre-made breakfast and snacks so I

could get an early start the next day, but the hummingbird feeders were not filled while I was there. After asking several times they were finally filled but even returning hours later in the afternoon for a check there was no activity, I get the impression that the feeders are rarely filled any more. The room was fine but nothing special, as was breakfast. It was also the most expensive non-lodge Pousada I stayed at on my trip and I wouldn't recommend it – you can certainly find a similar level of comfort for a much lower price in Lencois.

Chapada Diamantina – Palmeiras to Mucuge – This is a good full day outing and I would suggest definitely the way to bird this area, instead of birding Palmeiras and returning to Lencois, as there are good specialty birds all along the drive as well as great landscapes. I got an early start out of Lencois and parked at about -12.5436, -41.5753 at dawn. I birded the road in both directions but mostly to the south. In a couple hours I found **Sao Francisco Sparrow**, **Broad-tipped Hermit** (playback helps get better views), **Silvery-Cheeked and Planalto Slaty-Antshrikes**, **Caatinga Antwren**, **Black-bellied Antwren**, **Planalto Tyrannulet**, and **Scarlet-throated Tanager** (responsive to playback even from a good distance if you have enough volume). I made some further stops along the road winding uphill, turning up the freshly split **Brazilian Highland Elaenia** (*Elaenia sordida* - at the moment no English name assigned), and more **Broad-tipped Hermits**, **Sao Francisco Sparrows**, and **Scarlet-throated Tanagers**. From here I continued up to the open Cerrado habitat. I birded a few different spots but the best area was around -12.6469, -41.5690 where I quickly found **Horned Sungem**, **White-banded Tanager**, **White-rumped Tanager**, **Plumbeous Seedeater**, **Stripe-tailed Yellow-Finch**. It was pretty windy and I only heard a distant **Rufous-sided Pygmy-Tyrant** as well as another **Collared Crescentchest**. From here to Mucuge is a bit of a drive but there are numerous wetlands as you get closer to Mucuge. First though I stopped in a good looking spot and finally connected with **Great Xenops** (-12.7647, -41.5470). Getting closer to Mucuge, I stopped at most of the wetlands, finding **White-bellied**, **Copper**, and **Plumbeous Seedeater**. With time still left I passed through Mucuge and headed west a short ways, parking at a pullout near -12.9613, -41.3160. I found **Diamantina Tapaculo** easily in the middle of the afternoon, only having to get about 5-8m off the road into the scrub to get into a position to see it, which I did quickly. With still more time I headed to the Mucuge airport cerrado, parking around -13.0424, -41.4514. I walked a good distance and finally turned up **Gray-backed Tachuri** and **Rufous-sided Pygmy-Tyrant** almost where I parked as the afternoon advanced. I heard a couple more **Collared Crescentchest**, found a **Caera Gnateater** where the taller Caatinga type forest starts (-13.0524, -41.4569), then had one **Little Nightjar** and 10+ **Least Nighthawks** at dusk. The following morning I briefly birded the Caatinga near the airport again (-13.0527, -41.4571) finding **Narrow-billed Antwren**, **Caatinga Antwren**, **Stripe-backed Antbird**, **Gray-eyed Greenlet**, and more Caatinga birds. In Mucuge I stayed at Posada Mucuge which was nice and had a great breakfast. There are several nice restaurants and overall I thought the town was sleepy, charming, and scenic.

I left Mucuge pretty early for the quite long drive to Bom Jesus da Lapa in order to arrive before dusk for Bahian Nighthawk. I went to Bom Jesus before Caetit  as it made more sense to be in Bom Jesus in the evening and then Caetit  the following morning. A lot of driving that day but the plan worked really well.

Bom Jesus da Lapa – I arrived about 90 mins before dusk. I headed straight to the smaller bridge and stakeout for Bahian Nighthawk at -13.1490, -43.5401. The hotel where people have parked and access the river in the past was closed. I drove over the bridge and on another 1-2km and birded some dirt tracks through agricultural areas for a bit, but decided to return to the bridge for dusk, and am very glad I did. I parked at the closed hotel gate and walked up onto the bridge. Traffic was light enough that I felt safe doing this but I mostly stayed close to the S end of the bridge on the off chance two large vehicles came at the same time, so I could get off the bridge completely, as there is no shoulder or extra room on the bridge. Fortunately traffic remained very light, just a few cars passed in the time I was there. From the bridge at dusk I saw a large number of very distant (1-2km or perhaps further) Nighthawks that were far too far away to identify, despite being able to assume what they were. After some time nervously scanning and looking in all directions I finally had two **Bahian Nighthawks** fly past the bridge fairly close. I got good looks but they didn't stick around, and I stayed some time longer but saw no other close Nighthawks. I think that if I hadn't been on the bridge with the much better view from up high, I would have dipped.

After Bom Jesus da Lapa I turned around and back-tracked 2 hours to Caetité where there are numerous inexpensive hotels available and had another mediocre but serviceable pizza for dinner.

Caetité – I left pre-dawn and drove the short distance south of town on a good dirt road, turning from the good road at -14.2879, -42.5338 and parking at -14.2893, -42.5325. Just at dawn I heard and had a very brief terrible look at **“Wagler’s” Scaled Woodcreeper**. I birded all over the area including some bushwhacking and a little bit of fence hopping. I probably only ever got about 500m from my car at the most but tromped around a good bit. I turned up the same set of Caatinga birds again, including **Broad-tipped Hermit, Caatinga Antwren, Gray-eyed Greenlet**, etc. New birds for the trip and for me were **Blue-winged Macaw, Gray-headed Spinetail, Hangnest Tody-Tyrant, White-browed Antpitta** (a good bushwhack eventually yielded excellent views), **“Bahia” Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Helmeted Manakin**, and finally with a mixed flock, a very cooperative pair of **Minas Gerais Tyrannulet**, the main target and definitely star bird of the location. Hoping to get a better look at the Wagler's/Scaled Woodcreeper, and with a bit of time left, I headed back to the main dirt track and continued to about -14.3081, -42.5409. I quickly found most of the Caatinga birds again here, another **Brazilian Highland Elaenia** (*Elaenia sordida*), and finally, excellent looks at a **“Wagler’s” Scaled Woodcreeper**.

From here I started another long drive to Boa Nova, with the plan of arriving with time to bird a bit before dusk. In Boa Nova, Pousada dos Passaros has closed. I stayed at Pousada Sande which I believe is the only option in town. It is inexpensive, basic, clean, comfortable, and has a good restaurant (basically the only restaurant in town). They made me whatever I wanted to eat and were very accommodating with a very early breakfast. They can also make box lunches of whatever you would like to go. Overall it was fantastic that there was such a good place to stay in such a small / out of the way town.

Boa Nova - Lajedo dos beija-flores – As it turns out, this site is private and you're supposed to get permission to access. I didn't find this out until I got there, and I still don't know who you are

technically supposed to coordinate with, as I only found out later. I'll describe what I did, although it's not the right way to do it, nor would I recommend it to most people as it involved some fence hopping and bushwhacking. I parked at -14.3273, -40.2085 and hopped a barbed wire fence to get access to a mostly overgrown old track. I followed this uphill until it became difficult to follow, then bushwhacked the last 100m or so west until I came to a barbed wire fence. I hopped over this. The far side of the fence had a cleared path along it so I followed this S until I found another track that led uphill NW to the open rock area I was aiming for. Along the edge of the Caatinga, I easily found and had great looks at a pair of **Slender Antbird**. Up on the open rocky area I mostly ignored the multitudes of hummingbirds as I was hoping to find a roosting Pygmy Nightjar, which I didn't do. No problem though, as I quickly found a couple of **Pygmy Nightjars** at dusk via their eye shine and got good looks. I also heard **Small-billed Tinamou** again and found a few **Hangnest Tody-Tyrants**. A nocturnal fence-hopping and bushwhacking little journey got me back to my car with no problems, though again there is certainly a better way to access this site and I'm sorry I cannot report how that would be.

Boa Nova – Mata do Charmes (wet forest) – Drive west from town and turn onto the dirt track at -14.4116, -40.1381. Drive the narrow dirt track a few hundred meters to park at an area large enough to turn around in front of a large sign about the forest/area. Just after this the track becomes undriveable. Bird the track through the forest, both back the way you came and further along. It is not a huge forest patch but holds a lot of good birds – **Least Pygmy-Owl, Crescent-chested Puffbird, Spot-billed Toucanet, Golden-spangled Piculet, Spot-breasted Antwreio, Rufous-winged Antwren, Ferruginous Antbird, Rio de Janeiro Antbird, Striated Softtail, Bahia Spinetail, Gray-headed (aka Yellow-lored) Tody-Flycatcher, Gray-hooded Attila, Cinnamon-vented Piha** (I stumbled on one, much easier at Boa Nova), **Pin-tailed Manakin**, and what are supposedly **Dubois's Seedeaters**, though I cannot see how this is a valid species and not a color morph of **Yellow-bellied Seedeater**.

By mid-morning I had seen most of what I was looking for and I decided to bushwhack up a very, very overgrown track to gain access to a higher forest patch where Boa Nova Tapaculo has been recorded in the past (though not for several years). This adventure is not for the feint of heart. It is nearly 2km of track that is very hard to follow, bushwhacking through head high ferns and scrub. A much better plan would be hire a local with a machete to re-open the trail for you!

In any case, though, some directions and GPS points to get you started. Walk to approximately -14.4213, -40.1241 along the dirt road. On your left, to the N of the dirt road, is an old gate that leads to a severely overgrown track. Go through/over the gate and follow the track through head high ferns, eventually coming to an easier to pass grassy area. Keep right of the marsh and follow the largely invisible track as best you can. Keep your feet dry going over a little dam/bridge. There's a low hill in front of you and the track (severely overgrown again) heads right, then leads you into a bit of a wooded area, past a manmade small pond, and eventually you are walking along with a creek below you on the left. You want to be aiming all the while for GPS point -14.4193, -40.1212. This is where the track switchbacks to the right to begin climbing uphill. You can either follow the track (hellish head high ferns most of the way but the track is mostly easyish to see where it goes) or go a bit further and follow a drier off-track hillside uphill in the roughly right direction. This is initially easier but then gets steeper and less fun as you end up going through head high ferns all the same. The key thing to do is to get to GPS point -

14.4183, -40.1177. This is where you finally get back into the forest and can find the track inside the forest (and where it is easy to follow and fairly open). The GPS coordinates for the location where the Tapaculo was found years ago are -14.4127, -40.1157. I know that several people have gone looking in the past few years, myself included, and no one has found it recently. There are some nice birds that are fairly common up there though, such as **Ochre-rumped Antbird**, **Scaled Antbird**, **Such's Antthrush**, and **White-bibbed Antbird**.

Boa Nova/Poços – Serra do Arrepio – Get ahold of Mateus Gonçalves to visit this site. He can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/Goncalvesmateuus>. It is private land, and while publicly accessible there are a maze of trails and finding the territories for key birds would be a lot of wandering around. Mateus is a great kid and only charged me 150R for a morning birding here and at the following site. We had bit of bad luck with rain, and couldn't turn up a Buff-throated Purpletuft or Reiser's Tyrannulet (both fairly reliable here most of the time) but I still got my main target, **Wied's Tyrant-Manakin**, as well as the local and distinct form of **Hook-billed Hermit**, **"Ceara" Rufous-breasted Leaf-tosser**, and repeat encounters with **Slender Antbird**, **White-bibbed Antbird**, **Rufous Gnatcatcher**, **White-browed Antpitta**, and **Pallid Spinetail**,

Boa Nova/Poços - Pe do Nogueira – This is a quick visit and is fairly close to Serra do Arrepio. I went with Mateus though it could readily be done by yourself. The road is dirt and pretty steep but doable with a 2wd rental without too many problems. To get there, drive to -14.73428, -40.2150 and park. Start walking up the dirt track, Jacamars are at roughly -14.7298, -40.2132 and should be obvious without playback. Apparently they are always in the same spot. This site is also good for **Gray-capped Tyrannulet** and has plenty more of course, though my visit was brief as I once again had a huge drive ahead of me.

Estação Veracel – This is a publically accessible site with a public road crossing it. You'll want to stay and eat in Porto Seguro, which has plenty of options for accommodation and food. I would really recommend planning your itinerary with some flexibility, there are several hard birds here and it's probably worth at least two days, and perhaps more if you struggle with Banded Cotinga. The turn to the reserve is at -16.3969, -39.1823. You get into decent forest and can start birding shortly after turning off the main road. The visitor center is further along, and the road continues after that. Of note is that the largest clearing is a key spot to look for hummingbirds, watch for parrots, look for Short-tailed Nighthawk, and of course for Cotingas! The center of this clearing is approximately -16.3590, -39.1368. The visitor center can be birded from 8AM-5PM give or take after signing in and putting on snake-proof gaiters that they provide. I birded the forest a bit, and the large clearing a LOT. Good birds in the forest are **Band-tailed Antwren**, **Ringed Woodpecker**, **Hook-billed Hermit**, **Bahia Antwren**, **Black-headed Berryeater** (though I saw mine at the edge of the big clearing), and **Kinglet Manakin** among others. Good birds at the large clearing are **Blue-chinned**, **Rufous-throated**, and **White-chinned Sapphires**, **"Reichenow's" Blue-headed Parrot**, **Red-browed Parrot**, **Ochre-marked Parakeet**, **White-winged Cotinga**, the aforementioned Black-headed Berryeater, and **Bare-throated Bellbird**. I jammed an unexpected **Cocoa Thrush** in a fruiting tree just at the edge of the large clearing as well. Despite two mornings watching the tree tops and looking for Cotingas, I found no Banded Cotingas from the large clearing, so I went to the visitor center and asked if they had seen it lately. The guard at the gate told me they had been seeing one

occasionally, so I signed in, put on my snake gaiters, and walked into the compound. I'd been there about 2 minutes when another gentleman whistled me over, asked if I'd seen the Cotinga yet, and then pointed me at a close male perched silently in the mid canopy of a fruiting tree. In an instant mounting frustration was washed away and I watched the bird for well over an hour as it preened then flew between trees a bit, ate a bunch of Açai, then preened some more. Killer experience. In total I put in two full days birding here to see my day time targets.

I also birded four nights (the night of arrival, after each of my full days, and another night later in the trip as I was returning to Salvador). I tried, and tried, and tried for White-winged Potoo but never even heard one. I did find **Black-capped Screech-Owl**, "**Atlantic**" **Mottled Owl**, **Short-tailed Nighthawk** (over the largest clearing at dusk one night out of four), **Tawny-browed Owl**, and **Ocellated Poorwill** (vocal, at the edge of the largest clearing at dusk every night). The big owls were common and frustrated my attempts to finally see the Screech-Owl.

Reserva Natural da Vale do Rio Doce (Linhares) – I easily made reservations via email. The basic accommodation is quite affordable and the buffet style restaurant (pay by weight) was tasty and pretty good quality. The grounds surrounding the hotel are birdy and active, and **Red-billed Curassow** can be seen on the entrance road or on the lawns, and I saw **Maroon-faced Parakeet** eating Açai just in front of the restaurant. However to see many other birds you need to go into the reserve proper, which requires a guide. The folks from the hotel will put you in touch with the reserve people, who will get you to fill out a consent type form and give you a list of guides who are permitted into the reserve. I used Edinho (+55 27997835498) as he lives close by in the town of Sooretama. He charged me 200R for two half days (afternoon+evening of arrival and the following morning). He only speaks Portuguese but knows the birds by Latin name and where to find them, importantly. He took me straight to an area for Minute Hermit and within minutes I heard a flyby Hermit. I had the song already queued so hit play instantly and a very responsive **Minute Hermit** hovered in front of me for a few seconds before perching in plain view. Overall birding in the forest was a bit slow with little spontaneous song, a bit out of season. I managed to add a few more target birds but nothing that you can't find elsewhere. Overall, though, I really like Vale do Rio Doce and would have happily spent longer there. There is also a nesting Harpy Eagle though I did not have time to go to the nest (and this might require another bit of permission).

Mata dos Caetés – This is the Cherry-throated Tanager location, but also holds a large number of other nice birds, particularly if, like me, you've not yet birded in Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paulo provinces. I stayed at Estalagem Petra in Pedra Azul. There are a few other places to stay in Pedra Azul as well. From the south, Vargem Alta would be the closest town. To get to Mata dos Caetés, drive to -20.5158, -40.9861 and turn into the town there just by the Castelinho church. Aim for -20.5155, -40.9906, keep right there, and then continue up into the forest. There is another fork at -20.5117, -41.0040. Left can be followed for a few hundred meters before opening up to a Eucalyptus plantation, but going right here keeps you in better forest longer. Eventually you reach a gate at -20.5009, -41.0142. Even if the gate is open it is best to park outside the gate, as it may be closed later and people have gotten their vehicles locked in. You can freely walk up past the gate, even if closed, however. Cherry-throated Tanager has been seen a few hundred meters before the gate by a few folks I know of. I walked all over every accessible bit of the forest here, before and after the gate, for two full days, and dipped the Tanager.

However I had a ton of other good birds – **Dusky-legged Guan, Brazilian Ruby, Star-throated Antwren, Ochre-rumped and White-bibbed Antbird, Mouse-colored Tapaculo, Such's Antthrush, Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper** (common), **Pale-browed Treehunter, Sharp-billed Treehunter** (just one other record I saw for here, at it's very northernmost limit), **White-browed Foliage-Gleaner, Oustalet's Tyrannulet, Rough-legged Tyrannulet, Drab-breasted Pygmy-Tyrant, Hooded Berryeater, Cinnamon-vented Piha** (not uncommon), **Pin-tailed Manakin, Brown Tanager, Uniform Finch**, and more.

Reserva Serra Bonita – This is a great, great location, and I really enjoyed a couple of relaxed days here with excellent birding, good food, and charming hosts. A good way to finish up the trip. They are currently redoing their website and online reservations aren't working. As well, they didn't respond to email, but through others I managed to get a phone number for Robaria Becker, the son who is helping run the lodge and reserve now. He speaks English very well, and can be reached via WhatsApp at +55 41 99808080. I made reservations and arrangements for 4WD transfer up to the lodge directly with Robaria. Once at the reserve there are two roads to bird – the side road that leads from the last fork in the road to the lodge, and the other side of the fork, which leads up to some communication towers. As well, about half way up to the communication towers, there is a nice long loop trail. At -15.3853, -39.5715 is a bit of a clearing with a lot of flowering shrubs (good for hummingbirds, including **Sombre Hummingbird** and **Brazilian Ruby**). Walking between the shrubs leads to the trail, which goes through good forest for perhaps 1km before coming back out no more than 100m above where you entered. I birded the roads and the trail thoroughly for two days, and it took me two full days to find the new *Heliobatus* species, “Serra do Lontras” or “Bahia” Treehunter, but I did find it in a mixed flock at last, and it came in quite close, though silently, in response to playback. In addition to the **Bahia Treehunter**, I found **Plumbeous Antvireo** (sings softly, not with flocks, close to the ground), **Pink-legged Graveteiro** (vocal, very high, and mostly in flocks, probably was done nesting when I was there), **Bahia Spinetail, Gray-hooded Attila, Sharpbill, Black-capped Becard, Black-throated Grosbeak, Brown-backed Parrotlet, Star-throated Antwren, Salvadori's Antwren, Bahia Tyrannulet**, and **Rufous-brown Solitaire** among plenty of other nice species. I tried a both days staking out the flowering Lantana just behind the lodge after lunch, for a half hour to hour at a time, hoping for a Coquette, but had no luck.

Michelin Reserve (Ituberá) – This is one of two best sites, as far as I can tell, for Bahia Tapaculo. The other site is Fazenda Agua Boa and might be better for “Margaretta's” Great-billed Hermit, but I could not find any information about how to visit Fazenda Agua Boa, despite a lot of looking and asking. So I went to the Michelin Reserve. This site is free to visit, lodging is free, and they will even give you a free dinner, but you have to make arrangements, and you must have a park ranger as your guide, who you will need to tip 100R after a morning's birding. To make arrangements, contact Kevin Flesher at kevinmflesher@yahoo.com.br (Kevin speaks English as you might have guessed from his name!). The basic plan is that the park ranger, who will almost certainly only speak Portuguese, will take you to a Tapaculo territory, you use playback, and then go bushwhacking after the bird. You will drive your own vehicle (2wd is fine) to the forest, which takes 45m or so the dorms, so plan that in to your morning schedule. There are several territories so you probably shouldn't miss the bird in a morning. I got it at the first territory we tried, though it required some bushwhacking, some machete use, and a couple of wet, muddy creek crossings. I eventually had amazing views of **Bahia Tapaculo** from 2m or

so deep in a gnarly thicket. After this we went to the huge Sapacaya (spelling? Sorry I forget) tree. The trail to the tree takes you through tons of Heliconia and there were a lot of Reddish Hermits about. I had one flyby Hermit that sounded larger than I was unfortunately unable to lure in with playback, but I felt that this was the best area I saw to look for “Margaretta’s” Great-billed Hermit here. The guard also told me about a beautiful overlook that put you on top of the forest so we drove a good ways out of the way to go there and it basically is a view over rubber plantations, not the actual reserve, so I would decline that offer and focus on the forest closer to the Tapaculo and big tree for your mornings birding. I was pretty tired at this point of my trip and didn’t bird very hard core, but was trying for / hoping for the Hermit, and logged **Bahia Antwren, Scalloped Antbird, Bare-throated Bellbird, Kinglet Manakin** (abundant here, it is everywhere), and a nice selection of other birds. You could certainly make an enjoyable full day of it, or bird an afternoon and a morning, a nice location!

From here I drove back to Salvador and flew out. To return to Salvador from the south, by far the best bet is the ferry from Bom Despacho. It is straightforward, leaves hourly, and takes about 60-75m to cross. Occasionally there can be a wait of an extra hour or two if the ferries are filling up – particularly likely on Sunday afternoon returning to Salvador and Friday afternoon leaving Salvador, for instance. As well it’s 60m or longer to get between the ferry terminal and the airport, depending on traffic. The airport has a decent selection of food and good internet so I just got there a few hours early and chilled rather than risk anything.

All in all it was a very successful and enjoyable trip, though I drove about 6000km and was exhausted at the end of it. I missed very few birds, notably White-winged Potoo and Cherry-throated Tanager. Luckily Mata dos Caetés is easily gotten to from Rio de Janeiro or Minas Gerais so will be easy to add to a future trip for another try at Cherry-throated Tanager. Other than that I missed a couple of lesser targets with bigger ranges, and overall did about as well as I had hoped and expected. I was certainly glad to have given myself enough time at Veracel, Mata dos Caetes, and Serra Bonita. I would have happily stayed another day in Lençóis just to enjoy the beauty of the area and perhaps do a big day hike, and I could have easily stayed another day at Vale do Rio Doce, either birding or just relaxing to break up the trip a bit. As mentioned earlier, I think I would have preferred to do it as a one way from Salvador to Vitória and pay the one way car rental surcharge. It would have cut out about 1200km of driving at the end of the trip when I was both really tired and really tired of driving.

Apologies for errors / typos, I wrote this quickly. Any questions, feel free to get ahold of me – Josh Beck, pbjosh at gmail dot com.