



## Amazon Bird Expedition for Women, 16- 26 Sept 2024

Report by Alena Kacal (Participant)

### Day 1 - 16 September

Day 1 was arrival day for most of the group. The group stayed at a small hotel 5 minutes from the Manaus airport – ibis Manaus Aeroporto. It is on the outskirts of the city and not really near anything walkable, but was located on one of the main highways that we would take to leave the city. The rooms were very small – but clean and comfortable. The food was ok – but the a la carte menu sometimes took forever to be served (buffets when they were available were much quicker)

Tips for future travelers: 1) Blankets are not provided in rooms – ask at front desk. They had a supply there when asked. 2) There is a great water cooler next to the front desk. You pay just a couple Reais and you get a code that you can use to refill your water bottle with cold water as needed. 3) There is a little gas station next to the hotel (go right out of the front door) with snacks, drinks, ice cream and some toiletries etc. – a little cheaper than at the hotel.

Our group gathered for dinner before heading to bed early as we had an early wake up call.

### Day 2 – 17 September

After a 4:30 breakfast buffet at the hotel, our guides Vanilce and Eliene from Amazonas Birdwatching Eco Tours arrived with the van and we set out for the trip north to Presidente Figueiredo – a couple hours' drive north of Manaus. Our trip leader, Maira Oakar and a couple other participants had arrived in early morning due to flight cancellations.

Our first taste of the birds was at the rest stop we took at the Regional Café Priscilla in Presidente Figueiredo. In the parking lot we were greeted by the usual urban birds such as **Palm tanager**, **Tropical kingbird** and **Great Kiskidee**, but we also got good looks of a **Red-capped cardinal** and a **Glittering-throated emerald** as **Red-bellied Macaws** flew over.

Tip – It's useful to take a handful of tissues with you to the toilets just in case there is no toilet paper. Oh – and in Brazil it's customary NOT to flush the toilet paper. Instead throw in the garbage can provided.

We then continued on and turned off the main road onto a dirt road at Ramal do Urubui. (Ramal is the term used for these large well maintained dirt roads). We got out of the van and birded along the road. We were immediately greeted by **Scarlet Macaws** and **Blue-and-yellow Macaws** flying over calling. Most of the birds seen were high in the treetops. **Green** and **Black-Necked Aracaris** posed along with **Guianan** and **Green-backed Trogons**, **Black-spotted Barbet**, **Pied** and **Swallow-winged Puffbirds**, **Paradise Jacamars**, and a **Todd's Sirystes**. One flowering tree was filled with **Golden-winged Parakeets**, **Sapphire-rumped Parrotlets** and several species of honeycreepers. But the highlight of the morning was a small group of **Red-throated Caracaras** that were chasing each other around at the treetops making a loud

racket – almost sounding like a group of loud parrots.

After about 3 hours of birding, we were all drenched with sweat and getting tired. It was about 42 C with high humidity and most of us were unused to this kind of weather. The cooler of cold water in the van was much appreciated.



Red-throated Caracara (Alena Kacal)

Black-throated Aracari (Julie Morgan)

Guianan Trogon (Julie Morgan)

We headed to our hotel – Hotel Iracema Falls – to check in and drop off our bags. The rooms were not quite ready for us, so we dropped our bags in one of the rooms and headed out again to our next stop.

Our next stop was at the Pousada Aldeia Mari Mari. We were greeted again by a flock of **Blue-and-yellow macaws** and lunch was waiting for us in the restaurant – beautiful local fish, beef and sides. We ate with a lovely view of the river and the trees around us. It was incredibly hot, so we took the opportunity to rest for an hour or so after lunch – the hand-held mini-fans that Maira had given each participant were much appreciated as was the ample supply of cold water. Interesting birds kept coming into the Acai palms surrounding the restaurant – and we got good looks at **Purple-breasted** and **Spangled Cotingas**, **Bright-rumped Attila**, and **Piratic, Yellow-throated, and Sulphury Flycatchers**. Then suddenly a **Guianan Cock-of-the-rock** appeared in a tree right next to us – posing nicely for photos. This was to be the target bird of our afternoon walk, so it was a surprise to see it here.

At around 3, we donned our snake gaiters for our walk into the forest. They definitely added to the heat, but we were grateful for the protection it gave. Our walk took us downhill from the restaurant and across a rickety wooden bridge across the small river, then we walked about ½ km through the forest to an area marked by a barrier. This was the viewing area for the lek of **Guianan Cock-of-the-rock**. We spend about 1 ½ hours sitting here waiting for the males to arrive. Eventually we could see about 10 of these birds scattered in the forest in front of us – between ground level and about waist high. We all waited for a female to arrive so that the males would start dancing. But sadly no females made an appearance so we never saw the full display – just a few hops and clicks from a male here or there. Our walk back to the restaurant yielded a nice **Bronzy Jacamar** and at the restaurant everyone was excited to find a very rare **Dusky Purpletuft** – especially our guides.



Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock (Julie Morgan)

Dusky Purpletuft (Lisa Schibley)

Spangled Cotinga (Alena Kacal)

We headed back to the hotel where our rooms, air-conditioning and a shower waited for us. The rooms were very simple, but clean and spacious with a small working fridge. The surroundings were great and promised lots of birds, but a few coats of paint, a few chairs outside the rooms etc. would go a long way to making the place more appealing to visitors. Dinner was tasty and the big fans in the hall were very welcome. After a quick checklist meeting, all headed to bed exhausted.

### Day 3 – September 18

Breakfast at 5:15 and we were on the road by 5:45 headed out to find a special bird. A **Harpy Eagle's** nest had been spotted several days before and our guides had arranged for us to view the nest. We pulled onto a dirt road and eventually pulled over to meet our host who owned the land. We were told that there was a chick on the nest and that the adults fed it every couple of days. Since it had last been fed 2 days before, there was a good chance it would happen again today. We were asked to be very quiet to not disturb the birds, and were led to a small cleared areas where some logs had been put for seats. We set up camp. Through the trees we had a view of one very tall tree and we could see a large nest about half way up the tree. We could just about make out the head of the chick as he peeked out of the nest from time to time. After about 30 minutes, we suddenly saw an adult fly into the nest. At first, we could only see her head as she greeted the chick. But there did not seem to be any food presented. After a few minutes, the adult flew up to a branch overlooking the nest. We could see that it was most likely a female due to her huge size. She stayed there for quite a while, giving us great opportunities for photographs. After about an hour or so, we snuck back out to the road leaving the birds alone. It was a thrill to have seen this Queen of the Amazon!.



Iracema Falls Hotel (Lisa Schibley)



Harpy Eagle adult (Lisa Schibley)



At the Harpy Eagle nest (Maria Morales)

Several other birds were seen or heard during our campout including a **Black-tailed Fairy**, a **Black-tailed Trogon**, **Mealy Parrots**, a **Guianan Red-Cotinga**, **Screaming Pihas**, **Glossy-backed Becard**, **White-eyed Tody-Tyrant** and **Collared Gnatwrens**.

At this point a couple of the participants started to feel very sick – possible stomach bug – and the group returned to the hotel to give them a chance to rest in their rooms.

The rest of the group headed out to bird along the road leaving the hotel. **Painted Parakeets** flew over, and the group got a chance to focus on some of the birds typically found in the lower undergrowth – **Brown-bellied Stipplethroat**, **Gray** and **Spot-back Antwrens**, **Guianan Warbling-Antbird**, **Double-banded Pygmy-Tyrant**, **Tawny-crowned Greenlet** as well as a few woodcreepers – **Long-tailed**, **Wedge-billed**, and **Chestnut-rumped**.

After lunch at the hotel, and a siesta, the group headed out for another walk near the hotel. Highlights include a **Great Black Hawk**, **Crimson topaz Hummingbirds**, **Pygmy Antwren** and **Dusky Antbird** and a **Tiny Tyrant-Manakin**. A **Pompadour Cotinga** posed in the treetops and a nice variety of tanagers were seen – **Fulvous-crested**, **Flame-crested**, **Dotted** and **Spotted**.

An early dinner thankfully joined by our sick participants who were feeling a lot better, and we headed to bed happy and tired.

#### **Day 4 – 19 September.**

Our target bird this morning was the **Crimson topaz** which usually appears near the hotel very early in the morning. So after a very early breakfast we headed out to be at the key tree at daybreak. He did not disappoint and appeared and showed off his brilliant yellow throat to us. We spend the rest of the day exploring various roads near the hotel in the morning and after lunch at a great buffet restaurant at the hotel, we continued to explore the area around the hotel. There are so many little roads each with great birding – you could spend several days just in this area.

Highlights include: **Great Jacamar** and **Yellow-billed Jacamar**, **Yellow-tufted** and **Waved Woodpeckers**, **Lined Forest-Falcon**, **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**, **Green Oropendola**, **Red-billed Pied Tanager**, **Yellow-green Grosbeak**, **Slate-coloured Grosbeak**, **Amazonian Barred-Woodcreeper**, **Black-banded** and **Chestnut-rumped Woodcreepers**, **Black-headed Antbird**, **Fasciated Antshrike**, **Black-eared Fairy**, **Gray-breasted Sabrewing**, **Ferruginous-backed Ant-Wren**, **Mouse-coloured Antshrike**.

In the early evening we headed out to look for owls and were successful in seeing a **Tawny-**



## bellied Screech-owl and a Spectacled Owl.



Rufous-bellied Screech-Owl (Julie Morgan)



Green-backed Trogon (Jill PUNCHES)



Crimson Topaz (Lisa Schibley)

### Day 5 – 20 September.

On our last morning at Iracema Falls, we headed out early with a couple target birds in mind. The first was **Black Curassow** which we head at our first stop. It responded to a call back and eventually we saw it fly over the road and settle in a tree on the other side – hiding in the leaves. While we were searching for this – our driver called us and told us to look around. Down the road, behind the van was a small group of our second target – **Gray-winged Trumpeters**. They were nervously standing on the edge of the road looking like they were trying to decide what to do, and then they crossed the road together and quietly disappeared again in to the forest.

Our next stop took us to the Cachoeira da Onca reserve where we were to look for the iconic **Musician wren**. It was already late in the morning and getting hot. We had a short walk on a decent path before coming to a rickety rope bridge. After crossing this bridge over the river, we headed down a smaller trail with our snake gaiters once again. A short way along we paused and heard the Musician wren. He responded to a call back and we got good looks of him in the undergrowth low on the forest floor. An amazing song. Our other target – the Capuchinbird – did not make an appearance today.

We headed back to the hotel, checked-out and headed to the buffet restaurant for lunch. After a stop for ice-cream and a pharmacy, we headed back to the Ibis Hotel in Manaus arriving just at sundown. Dinner was at the hotel.

### Day 6 – 21 September

We were up before dawn in order to get to the canopy tower at the Museu da Amazônia (known as the MUSA tower), inside the Adolpho Duck Forest Reserve. The early hours are reserved for birdwatchers to visit the tower before the general public arrives – but you need to book in advance. We arrived by 5:30 and walked the short path to the tower. It is a climb of 242 steps that takes you to an observation platform above the canopy level. We arrived up top in time for sunrise.

There were several raptors in addition to the **Black and Turkey Vultures** – an **Osprey, Short-tailed Hawk, Gray-headed, Hook-billed, and Double-toothed Kites**. Both **Channel-billed and White –throated Toucans, Guianan Puffbirds, Caica, Blue-headed, Red-lored, Orange-winged and Mealy Parrots** flew by along with **Red-and-green, Blue-and-Yellow, Scarlet and**

**Red-bellied Macaws, Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireos** were calling from below and **Blue Dacnis** were flying around together with **Purple and Green Honeycreepers, Yellow-backed and Flame-crested Tanagers.**

At 8:30 when the park opened to the public we headed to the café for a juice and popsicle break and then took a walk through the trails. It was very quiet by then – but at the end we encountered a mixed feeding flock including **Wester Olivaceous Flatbill, Cinereous Anstrike, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, Rufous-tailed Xenops** and **Dusky-throated Antshrike.** We also added **Olivaceous,** and **White-chinned Woodcreepers** to our list.



Guianan Puffbird (Julie Morgan)



Flame-crested Tanager (Phyllis Weintraub)



Sunrise at the MUSA tower (Vanilce Souza)

After lunch back at the hotel, we checked out and headed out of Manaus to Novo Airao. We crossed the Journalist Philippe Daou Bridge over the Rio Negro – 3.6 km long, and continued on the long road to Novo Airao. At points the road was fine and well-paved, but there were long sections of continuous pot-holes making for a very bumpy ride as the van driver swerved and negotiated around the holes. We finally arrived at the outskirts of the town and took a dirt road at Ramal dos Bons Amigos. Just before sunset, we set up a camp near a known hunting perch of a Rufous Potoo. We settled in and waited quietly for about 1.5 hours hoping for the bird who did not arrive. We did hear one call, along with **Great Tinamou, Common Pauraque, Tawny-bellied Screech-owl** and **Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon.**

After leaving our camp, we headed to dinner and a local restaurant and headed to our hotel – Pousanda Novo Airao for the night.

The hotel was very comfortable with big beds, hammocks outside and a little pool. It served breakfast in the morning but no other meals.

## Day 7 – 22 September

An early breakfast, and we headed out for our first adventure on the river. We boarded 2 boats at Novo Airao and headed out on the Rio Negro. The water is so low after a 3-year drought that we had to walk quite a way down over a steep broad beach to board the boats. We headed into the Anavilhanas National Park where we birded up and down a few of the channels (sadly many of the side channels were too low for boat traffic). **Agami Herons, Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, Cocoi** and **Striated Herons, Orange-fronted Yellow-Finches** were everywhere as well as a **Rufescent Tiger-Heron** and a **Black-collared Hawk.** Festive parrots and **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** flew by along with several species of swallows.

We landed on the beach of one of the islands and headed into the forest in-search of Wire-tailed manakins, which we did not find. We did get good views of **Green-tailed Jacamar, Ringed Woodpeckers, Guira Tanagers** and **Black-crested Antshrikes.** And there were several

species of woodcreepers – **Striped, Zimmer’s** and the amazing **Long-billed Woodcreeper**. As we walked back to the boat, a **Black Hawk-Eagle** flew over. We were sad to head back but grateful for lunch at a local café that included a delicious flan, and a much welcome siesta in the air-conditioned hotel.

At 5 pm we headed back to Ramal Dos Bons Amigos for another attempt at the **Rufous Potoo**. On arrival we heard and found a couple of **Black-faced Antbirds** and an **Ocellated Woodcreeper**. We settled down again in our little camp – this time armed with a few stools we had borrowed from the café at lunch time. The usual cast of night birds called around us and we waited for the Potoo to arrive. After quite a wait, suddenly it was there sitting on its perch. We were able to photograph and enjoy it for about 20 minutes before we decided to leave it to its business. It was still there as we drove off.



Rufous Potoo (Julie Morgan)



Long-billed Woodcreeper (Jill Panches)



Agami Heron (Phyllis Weintraub)

We had dinner again at the same café and headed back to hotel for a good night’s sleep.

Day 8 – 23 September.

After another breakfast before sunrise, we headed to Ramal do Medico for our last morning birding in the area. We made several stops along the road – finding a **Fiery topaz** hummingbird, **Black-tailed** and **Green-backed Trogons**, **White-necked Puffbirds**, **Ivory-billed Aracari**, **Red-stained** and **Cream-colored Woodpeckers**, and yet another woodcreeper – the **Duida Woodcreeper**. Many species of antbirds were heard including **Black-throated**, **Dusky** and **Black-faced**.

But our key target bird for the day was the **Imeri Wren** – a subspecies of the Musician Wren – with different color and different song from the Musician Wren we saw in Presidente Figueiredo. We headed into the forest on a small trail and a wren responded to a playback. He was very active, bouncing around from branch to branch on the forest floor and hard to photograph. But we did hear and record his beautiful song. On the way back out we saw an egg of a **Blackish Nightjar** on the side of the path. They lay them straight on the ground. Later we had to return to the area to retrieve a forgotten water bottle – our guide Vanilce walked in to get the water bottle and reported that the egg was no longer there. We regretted that unknowingly our presence caused the parent bird to fly, leaving her egg vulnerable to predation. We never know how just being in the area affects the wildlife that we may not even see.



After lunch and check out of the hotel we began our long journey back in the direction of Manaus over the potholes once again. We stopped for the night in Manacapuru – at the Pousada e Balneario Cirandeira Bela. This hotel is also a popular swimming spot with a river and play areas for kids and families. We stayed in little cabins which were well set up and very comfortable. But the best part were all the trees in the area which attracted lots of birds and monkeys. The best tree is in the parking lot – as we pulled in we could already see tanagers and honeycreepers feeding on the fruit of this tree – including a **Paradise Tanager**. After quickly checking in to our rooms and having a popsicle, we headed out to bird. A little **Butterfly Coquette** was feeding near our rooms along with some Spider monkeys. In the magic parking lot tree, there were **Gilded Barbets**, **Blue-capped**, **Golden-headed** and **White-crowned Manikins**, **Masked Tetras**, **Golden-bellied**, **Rufous-bellied** and **White-vented Euphonies**, **Turquoise Tanagers**, and **Purple** and **Green Honeycreepers**.

A wonderful dinner was served family style in the beautiful restaurant. And we headed to bed.



Butterfly Coquette (Julie Morgan)



Gilded Barbet (Jill PUNCHES)



Yellow-tufted Woodpecker (Lisa Schibley)

#### Day 9 – 24 September

Our day started early with a visit to a stream side birding hide. The object of our visit was the **Fiery Topaz** that can often be seen feeding in the early morning along the stream. Sadly, he was a no show, although a couple members of the group saw one fly by further upstream. A quick pre-breakfast walk turned up a few special birds – a **Point-tailed Palmcreeper**, **Black-tailed Trogon**, a **Black-necked Red-Cotinga** and a **Pink-throated Becard**.

After a delicious breakfast, we headed out on one of the trails behind the cabins. Our paths crossed with a hoard of army ants and we stopped to search for birds coming in to eat. We were soon rewarded with great views of **Yellow-browed Antbird**, **White-cheeked Antbird** and **Reddish-winged Bare-eye**. Once the ants had passed, it started to rain gently so we raced down the path to the shelter of another birding hide. Just in time for a thunderstorm to pass through. A **Brownish Twistwing** came out after the rain but otherwise it was very quiet. Then it was off to dry off, check out and have lunch at the restaurant.





Reddish-winged Bare-eye (Lisa Schibley)



Blue-capped Manakin (Lisa Schibley)



Pink River Dolphin (Maira Oakar)

After lunch, we headed east again, stopping briefly on the road to see a gathering of a couple hundred **Purple Martins** on the telephone wires – the vanguard of the larger numbers that would be arriving soon.

The afternoon was spent taking a boat ride out from one of the side channels of the Rio Negro to the main river. It rained on us a little as we navigated some very shallow channels to the river. The boatmen said that they have never seen the river this low and at one point our boat hit ground and had to be pulled off to deeper water. We stopped at a platform where we were able to swim with the Pink River Dolphins and afterwards visited a local tribe who performs some tribal dances for us. Along the way we were able to see some good views of **Southern Lapwings, Striated Herons, and Orange-fronted Yellow-Finch.**

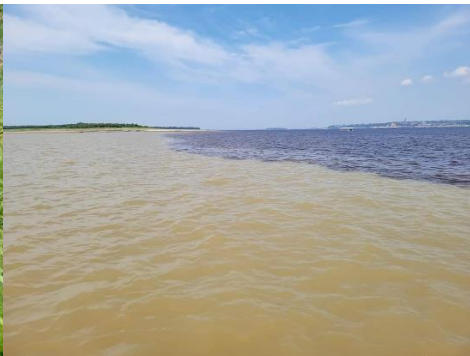
Once back at the bus, a bit damp and tired, we headed back to Manaus and the Ibis Hotel for the night and dinner.

Day 10 – 25 September

After an early breakfast, we headed back over the bridge over the Rio Negro to Varzea do Iranduba. We made several stops along the road along some wetlands, and then in an area of agricultural and mixed forest along the river. There was a wealth of birds at every site. At the wetlands we saw **Limpkin, Rufescent Tiger-Heron**, a beautiful **Savannah Hawk, Red-breasted Meadowlark, Black-capped Donacobius**, and **Wing-banded Hornero**. Several species of **Spinetails** peeked out from the undergrowth – **Yellow-chinned, Red-and-white, Plain-crowned and Dark-breasted. Bicoloured Conebills** flitted in the Cecropia trees. An agricultural patch revealed **Yellow-bellied Seedeaters, Hooded Tanagers, Orange-backed Troupial** and **Tui Parakeets**. It would be well worth spending more time to explore this area.



Rufescent Tiger-Heron (Jill Punches)



The meeting of the rivers (Erik Ostrander)



Solitary Sandpiper (Phyllis Weintraub)

After lunch back at the hotel, we headed across town to the Port of Manaus to board a boat for

a tour down river to the meeting of the rivers. It was striking to see how low the river was at the port – the lowest in over 100 years. We travelled for a while at the meeting point of the black Rio Negro river and the brown Solimoes (Amazon) – watching dolphins and terns and then headed up the Solimoes river. The highlight was a small channel where a large expanse of wet mud was exposed. Hundreds of shorebirds were in the area feeding alongside **Wattled Jacanas** and **Striated Herons** – **Hudsonian Godwit**, **Pectoral**, **Solitary**, **Least** and **White-rumped Sandpipers**, **Collared Plovers**, **American Golden-Plovers**, and **Lesser** and **Greater Yellowlegs** – with **Black Skimmers** flying by and several species of swallows and martins overhead. As we left a couple of **Oriole Blackbirds** flew in to say goodbye. Then back to the Ibis hotel for dinner.

Day 11 – 26 September

We began our last day of the tour very early in the morning to head north again to the Torre ZF-2 canopy tower managed by INPA (Brazilian National Institute for Amazonian Research) in the Cuieiras forest reserve. We divided up into 4X4 vans for the trip which took us down forest tracks to the tower. We arrived just before dawn and were treated to a fantastic picnic breakfast by our guides. As it got light we headed up the tower. It is around the same height as the MUSA tower but seemed to sway a little more as we went up and although there are more platforms on the way up, there are no benches or places to sit except on the stairs.

At the top we were greeted by swarms of little gnats – there was no breeze to blow them away as there had been at MUSA. But the birds were great. **Black-spotted Barbets**, **Glossy-backed Becard**, **Black-faced Dacnis**, **Yellow-backed tanagers**, **Yellow-margined Flatbill**, **Painted Tody-flycatchers**, **Pompador** and **Purple-breasted Cotinga**, and **Bright-rumped Attila** all vied for attention, while several species of parrots and macaws flew over. From the forest we heard **Variegated Tinamou**, **Amazonian Pygmy-owl**, and **Thrush-like Antpitta** calling. But the 2 stars of the day were a couple brilliant **Paradise Tanagers** that came in very close for photos, and the smallest passerine of the world – a tiny **Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant**.



Short-tailed Pygmy Tyrant (Phyllis Weintraub)



Paradise Tanager (Lisa Schibley)



ZF-2 tower (Maira Oakar)

By late morning the day heated up and the birds got quiet and we began our long journey back to Manaus.

For our last evening, we were taken to dinner at a great restaurant – Amazonico. But first we stopped off at a shopping area in the middle of the city (at Avenida Efigenio

Salles) to witness the nightly roosting of over 5,000 **White-winged Parakeets**. These birds flew in from all directions in large flocks to roost in the trees lining the road and parking area. The noise was fantastic. A great way to end the trip – followed by a great dinner together.

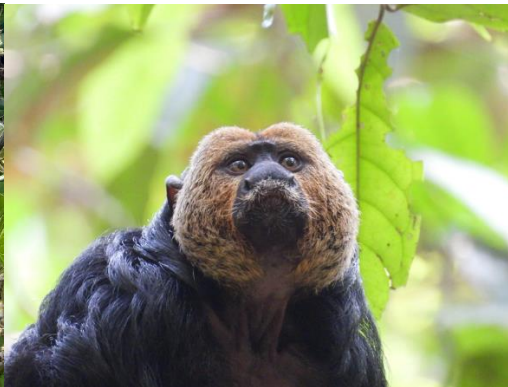
Day 12 – 27 September.

Time to go home. But filled with great memories and lots of great birds.

Here are a few photos of some of the monkeys we saw on the trip.



Humboldt's Squirrel Monkey  
(Maira Oakar)



Golden-faced Saki  
(Lisa Schibley)



Guianan Bearded Saki  
(Julie Morgan)

For a complete ebird trip report you are invited to check out : <https://ebird.org/tripreport/275327>

For a webinar presentation about the trip : <https://youtu.be/PJc9cQCeos8>

Also check Hannah and Erik Go Birding Podcast for their reports of the trip:  
[www.gobirdingpodcast.com](http://www.gobirdingpodcast.com)

For more information on future trips to Brazil and the Amazon, including all-women trips:  
[www.birdingistheworldbrazil.com](http://www.birdingistheworldbrazil.com)