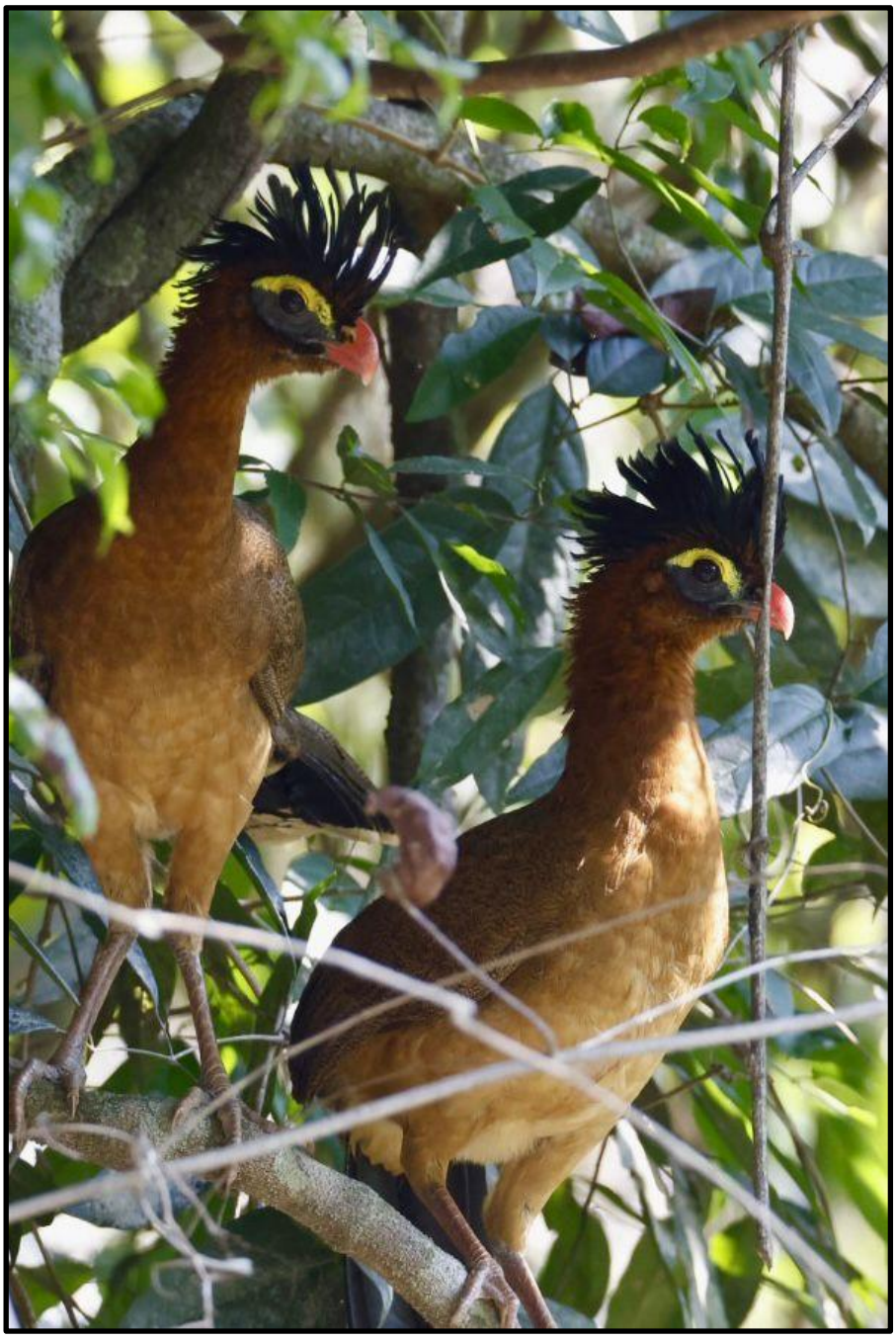
Brazil

Madeira & Tapajós - Endemics of the Rio Aripuanã

Acre Extension



Nocturnal Curassows by Adam Riley

Nowhere inspires more awe and wonder at the raw beauty of remote nature like the Amazon Basin of South America. Pioneered by Major Candido Rondon de Silva, explorations in this region of Brazil became the stuff of legend, as Rondon enabled the first telegraph line and subsequently the first road, to cross the Brazilian Amazon. He discovered numerous indigenous groups, named several major rivers, and is hailed by many Brazilians as one of the true heroes of Brazil's native people and lands.

This area of Brazil became most famous with the publication of a biographical work on Theodore Roosevelt's ill-fated expedition on the Rio de Duvida (River of Doubt). None other than Rondon himself escorted and outfitted the expedition in 1914, that nearly cost the ex-president his life. The mishaps of Roosevelt's adventure only added to the mystique and draw of the area, which continues to be one of the least-accessible, most remote areas in the World. Luckily for us, the Pousada PiraAçu is a very conveniently located lodge where superb birds and wildlife await, including the near mythical Rondonia Bushbird. We will focus our efforts on seeking out the numerous special bird species on the lodges many trails and river systems. Fine birding will be had in the Porto Velho and Humaita area, on the West Bank of the Madeira River, where we will have exposure to completely unique habitats, and species, on the other side of the Madeira interfluvium. This will be an unforgettable adventure into the heart of the Amazon!

Our short extension to Acre will give us an extra opportunity at finding Rondonia Bushbird, as well as a good number of low-density species restricted to the terra firme and bamboo forests of southwestern Amazonia.

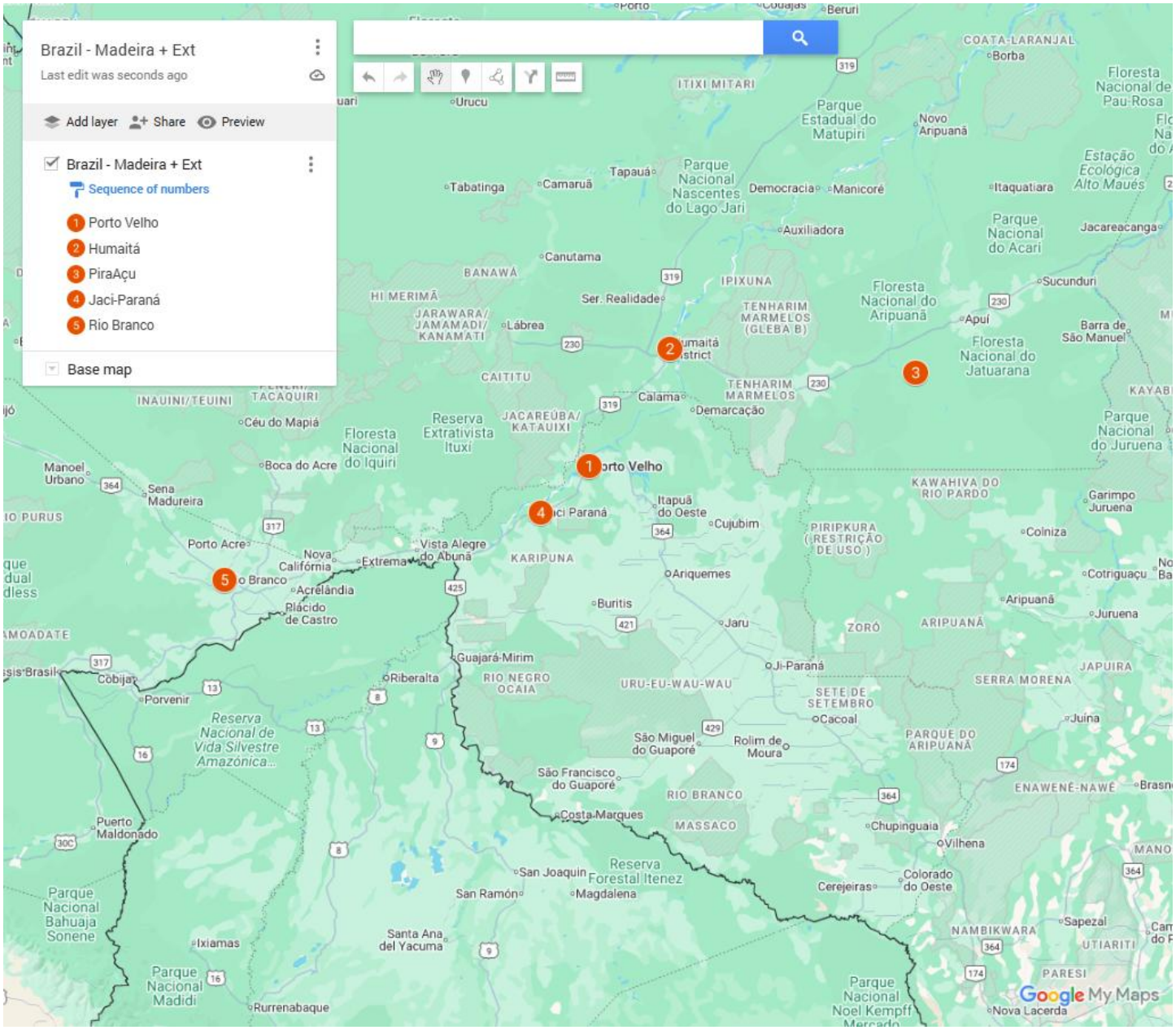
Itinerary & Map

Madeira & Tapajós endemics of the Rio Aripuanã

Day 1	**Arrival in Porto Velho**
Days 2 to 5	**Porto Velho & Humaitá areas (east & west bank of Rio Madeira)**
Day 6	**Humaitá to PiraAçu**
Days 7 to 11	**PiraAçu**
Day 12	**PiraAçu to Humaita**
Day 13	**Final departure**

Acre Extension

Day 1	**Arrival in Porto Velho**
Day 2	**Porto Velho to Jaci-Paraná**
Day 3	**Jaci-Paraná to Rio Branco**
Days 4 to 6	**Rio Branco**
Day 7	**Final departure**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Sequence of numbers
1 Porto Velho
2 Humaitá
3 PiraAçu
4 Jaci-Paraná
5 Rio Branco
Base map
Google My Maps

Birding sites in detail



Spot-tailed Nightjar by Forrest Rowland

Porto Velho & Humaitá areas (east & west bank of Rio Madeira). We will take advantage of our location on the West Bank of the Madeira River, to allow everyone an exciting introduction into Amazonian avifauna while searching out many species not found east of the Madeira River. We will also spend some time just east of the Madeira River, near Humaita, where certain species can be found that are not on the West Bank, nor do they cross the Machado or Tapajos Rivers further east. In the Amazonian Basin, biodiversity is practically defined by the huge divisions made by Amazonian tributaries, such as the ones just mentioned. Rivers act as evolutionary barriers, separating east from west, and north from south, creating a huge patchwork of distinct regions (interfluvium) between waterways. Many lifeforms simply never endeavour to cross these massive rivers, and therefore have evolved separately. On this tour we will visit four distinct interfluvium, starting here on the Banks of the Madeira.

The area around Porto Velho and the smaller city of Humaita, to the north, hosts some fine sections of primary and varzea forest and, perhaps more importantly, the northern reaches of Beni savannah habitats and sandy soil 'campina' forests. This mosaic of endemic-rich habitats beckon us to spend a few important days exploring each of these unique ecotones and microhabitats before we continue east to our primary destination. Undoubtedly, we will find our days spent here very much worth the while!



Brown-banded Puffbird by Rob Williams



Bluish-fronted Jacamar by Forrest Rowland

The primary and riverine forests here are readily accessed by series of two-tracks off the main highway, and the birding will be straight-forward. Naturally, should we be fortunate enough to encounter an antswarm, we might decide to wander off in search of some of the more iconic species of antbirds in the understory. There are many species in the forests and recuperated secondary habitats around Porto Velho and Humaita we hope to encounter, that are unlikely or absent at PiraAçu.

These include Spot-tailed Nightjar, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift, Brown-banded Puffbird, Western Striolated Puffbird, Bluish-fronted Jacamar, Ivory-billed Aracari, Golden-collared Toucanet, White-bellied Parrot, Bonaparte's Parakeet, Predicted Antwren, Peruvian Warbling Antbird, Black Antbird, Sooty Antbird, White-throated Antbird, Hairy-crested Antbird, Bar-bellied Woodcreeper, Inambari Woodcreeper, Olive-backed Foliage-gleaner, an undescribed species of Tody-Tyrant (awaiting formal description), and Fiery-capped Manakin. In the varzea and primary forests east of the Madeira, we'll look for Short-tailed Parrot and Festive Amazon, Glossy Antshrike, Leaden Antwren, Zimmer's Woodcreeper, Plain Softtail, Black-capped Donacobius, Masked Crimson Tanager and Wing-barred Seedeater amongst others.

Two of the most important habitat types we will dedicate some time to include the white sand forests (campinas) within the broader primary forest type, as well as the surprisingly grand tracts of savanna (cerrado) that are found here. Though access is relatively limited, the most sought-after species representative of each can all be found. We will plan to spend ample time in the morning, before things heat up, in these open biomes in search of such tantalizing specialities as Small-billed and Red-winged Tinamous, Ocellated Crake (with luck!!!), Little Nightjar, White-eared Puffbird, Bronzy Jacamar, Yellow-chevroned and Peach-fronted Parakeets, Rusty-backed Antwren, Humaita Antbird, Cinereous-breasted Spinetail, Southern Scrub Flycatcher, Sharp-tailed Tyrant, Stripe-necked Tody-Tyrant, Yellow-throated Flycatcher, Black Manakin, Campina Jay, Red-shouldered, Black-faced, Hooded and White-rumped Tanagers, Wedge-tailed Grass Finch, Lined, Double-collared, Plumbeous, Dark-throated and Copper Seedeaters, and should they be vocalizing we might find the elusive Black-masked Finch.



Red-fan Parrot by Forrest Rowland

Humaitá to Mata Matá via KM 180.
We begin the day by crossing the Madeira River on a ferry before



Red-billed Pied Tanager by Forrest Rowland

starting our journey along the unpaved Trans-Amazonica highway. A couple of targeted stops will be made to look for a pair of endemic antbirds we are unlikely to find elsewhere on the trip, the Manicoré Warbling Antbird and Aripuanã Antwren. Both species are confined to terra firme and white sand forests that lie between the Madeira and the Roosevelt Rivers.

PiraAçu. From Mata Matá, a tiny village on the west bank of the Aripuanã River, we'll board the lodge's boats and travel roughly two and a half hours upstream to Pousada PiraAçu.

We'll get acquainted with our home for the next few days, the wooden cabins are rustic, but comfortable and perfectly functional with hot water showers and a good air conditioning unit, in addition to a screened in front veranda. The lodge offers a complimentary daily laundry service to guests, and the food is excellent and plentiful.

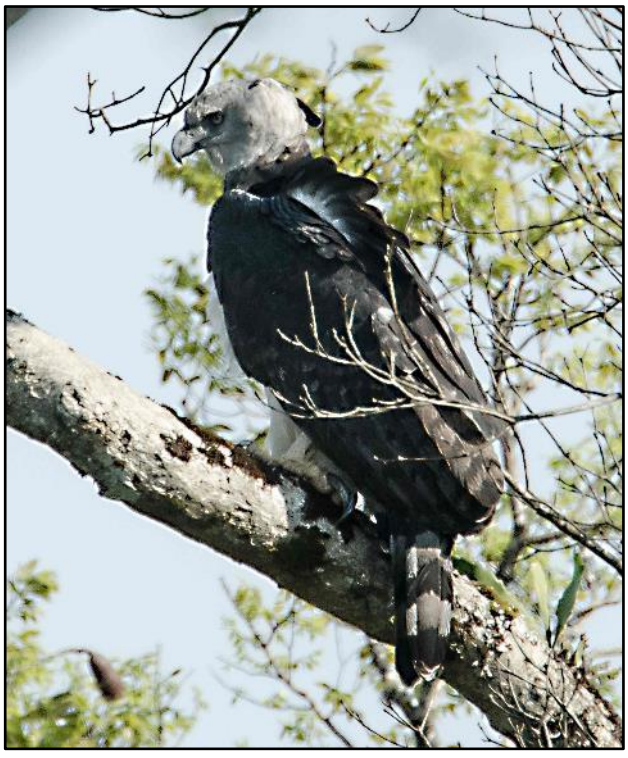
We'll start exploring our immediate environs, where we can expect to find Scarlet Macaw, Madeira Parakeet, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, White-vented and Rufous-bellied Euphonias, Red-capped Cardinal, Flame-crested, Turquoise and Green-and-gold Tanagers, Black-faced and Yellow-bellied Dacnis, Buff-throated Saltator and Flame-crowned Manakin.

The nearby dock we might find Green-tailed Goldenthroat, Buff-breasted Wren and Black Caracara, but the real attraction of the dock are the regular sightings of Amazon River Dolphin!

PiraAçu is strategically located on the right bank of the Rio Aripuanã, one of the largest rivers in the Madeira Tapajós interfluvium. From this base we have access to three other rivers, each with a different character and range of micro habitats. Covering everything from small oxbow lakes, seasonally flooded areas, mixed terra firme forest, patches of slender bamboo, wide floodplains, transitional forests, upland terra firme and hilly terra firme forest - every day will be different!

Often described as everlasting green, the true colours of such diverse forests range from green and yellow to bright orange, red and purple. Depending on the timing of the rains, the blooming plants and trees of the forest will likely be as beautiful and fascinating as the multitude of lifeforms living within. It's sure to be an unforgettable experience!

There are far too many possible species of interest to list here, but some of the most highly desired and spectacular

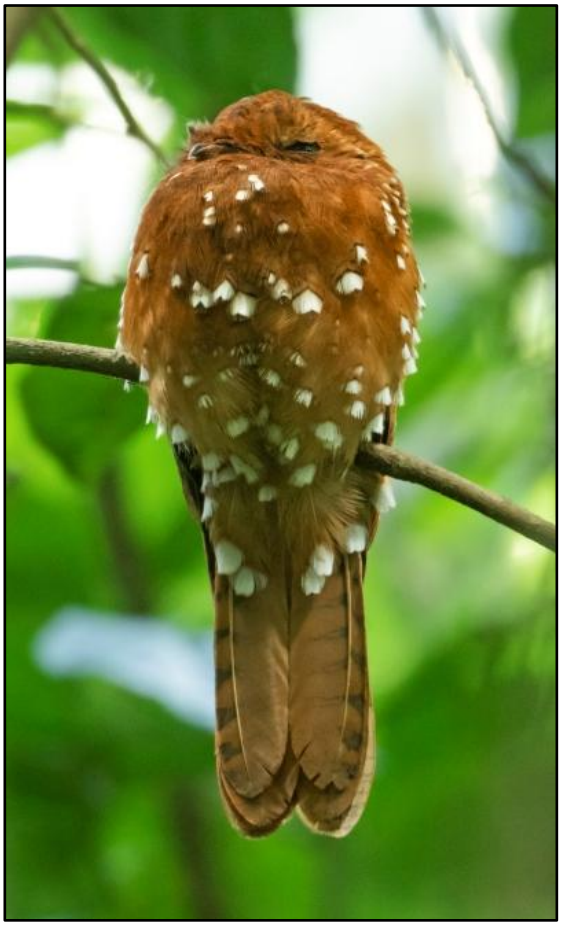


Harpy Eagle by Forrest Rowland



Razor-billed Curassow by Bobby Wilcox

bird species we hope to encounter include the mythical Rondonia Bushbird, Buff-cheeked Tody-Flycatcher, Grey, White-throated, Brazilian, and Variegated Tinamous, Spix's Guan, Nocturnal (rare) and Razor-billed Curassows, Zigzag Heron, Starred Wood Quail, Harpy and Crested Eagles, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Slate-colored and White-browed Hawks, Sunbittern, Sungrebe, Dark-winged Trumpeter, Pied Lapwing, Hoatzin, Pavonine, Little and Black-bellied Cuckoos, Tawny-bellied Screech Owl, Crested, Spectacled, and Black-banded (rare) Owls, Amazonian Pygmy Owl, Sand-colored and Short-tailed Nighthawks, Blackish and Ladder-tailed Nightjars, Long-tailed, White-winged and Rufous Potoos, Amazonian and Pale-rumped Swifts, Crimson Topaz, Needle-billed, Great-billed and Reddish Hermits, Black-eared Fairy, Green-tailed Goldenthroat, Black-bellied Thorntail, Long-billed Starthroat, Grey-breasted Sabrewing, Blue-chinned, Rufous-throated and White-chinned Sapphires, six species of trogon, Pavonine Quetzal, Amazonian, Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots, all five species of South American kingfisher, seven species of puffbird, five species of jacamar, Black-girdled Barbet, Curl-crested and Red-necked Aracaris, Gould's Toucanet, Bar-breasted Piculet, Ringed, Cream-colored, Chestnut, Scale-breasted and Red-necked Woodpeckers, Cryptic and Slaty-backed Forest Falcons, Kawall's Amazon and Red-fan Parrot, Crimson-bellied and Santarem Parakeets, five species of macaw, Saturnine, Glossy, Natterer's Slaty, White-shouldered, Amazonian and Pearly Antshrikes, Plain-throated, White-eyed, Sclater's and Ihering's Antwrens, Banded, Rufous-faced, Ferruginous-backed, White-breasted, Spot-backed, Dot-backed and Scale-backed Antbirds, Black-spotted and Pale-faced (!!!) Bare-eyes, Chestnut-belted Gnateater, Variegated, Alta Floresta and Thrush-like Antpittas, Rusty-belted Tapaculo, Rufous-capped and Black-faced Antthrushes, Short-billed and Black-tailed Leaftossers, Spot-throated, Long-tailed, Long-billed, Hoffman's, Uniform and Rondonia Woodcreepers, Rondonia Scythebill, Slender-billed and Rufous-tailed Xenops, nine species of foliage-gleaners, Speckled and Ruddy Spinetails, Chico's Tyrannulet, Snethlage's, Zimmer's and Buff-cheeked Tody-Tyrant, Cinnamon Neopipo, Cinnamon-crested, Golden-crowned and White-crested Spadebills, Black-necked Red Cotinga, Crimson Fruitcrow, Spangled, Purple-throated, and Pompadour Cotingas, Blue-backed, Black, Snow-capped, Flame-crowned and Red-headed Manakins, Brown-winged Schiffornis, Plush-crested Jay, Black-collared Swallow, Scaly-breasted, Tooth-billed and Musician Wrens, Red-billed Pied, Flame-crested, Fulvous-crested, White-winged Shrike, Dotted, Masked, Paradise, Opal-rumped, Green-and-gold and Swallow



Rufous Potoo by Dušan Brinkhuizen



Spangled Cotinga by Bobby Wilcox

Tanagers, Short-billed Honeycreeper, Rose-breasted Chat, Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak, Green and Olive Oropendolas and many more.

Night excursions are a must! We'll try various locations, but the landing strip alone has turned up Little and Blackish Nightjars, Common Pauraque, Common Potoo, Tawny-bellied Screech Owl, Crested and Spectacled Owls and Amazonian Pygmy Owl, while on the forest trails we shall search for Rufous and Long-tailed Potoos. Nocturnal Curassow has been seen and heard in the area too – perhaps we'll get lucky. Birds to one side, the forests are home to a veritable parade of bizarre and wondrous insects, amphibians, and reptiles.

Porto Velho to Jaci-Paraná. Remnant patches in the Jaci-Paraná area are home to interesting species such as Rondonia Warbling Antbird, Tooth-billed Wren, Rufous-necked Puffbird, and more. We'll take a boat trip to river islands in the Madeira River where we look for Orinoco Goose, Black Skimmer, Chestnut-fronted Macaw,



White-throated Jacamars by Dubi Shapiro



White-cheeked Tody-Flycatcher by Clayton Burne

Olive-spotted Hummingbird, Black-and-white Antbird, Lesser Hornero, Parker's Spinetail, White-bellied Spinetail, Brownish Elaenia and Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant.

Jaci-Paraná to Rio Branco. If we missed Rondonia Bushbird at PiraAçu, we may be able to search for it this morning if water levels on the small river, we use to access the site allow. Otherwise, we'll bird in the morning in sandy campinarana forest west of Jaci-Paraná where Citron-bellied Attila, Cryptic Forest Falcon, Buff-cheeked Tody-Flycatcher, and Plush-crested Jay are amongst the possibilities. Dusan

We then have a long drive west to reach Rio Branco, the capital city of Acre state. The city of Rio Branco is in the Acre River Valley; bisected by this large river. Formed during the 19th century 'rubber cycle', the city is still predominantly reliant on cattle ranching and agriculture.

Rio Branco. We can look forward to full days of birding as we explore the disturbed terra firme forests and large stands of bamboo patches to the west of Rio Branco. Our primary reason for being here are the suite of species found here, in southeast Peru and the remote northern parts of Bolivia.

We'll focus on Blue-headed Macaw, Rufous-headed Woodpecker, White-throated Jacamar and Black-faced Cotinga. We expect to come across Bamboo Antshrike, Bluish-slate Antshrike, Goeldi's Antbird, Ornate Stipplethroat, Bamboo (Ihering's) Antwren, Yellow-breasted Warbling Antbird, Striated, Riparian and Manu Antbirds, Rufous Twistwing, Long-crested Pygmy Tyrant, Acre Tody-Tyrant, Flammulated Bamboo Tyrant, and White-cheeked Tody-Flycatcher. Other specialties in the bamboo forests and associated habitats include Rufous-breasted and Fine-barred Piculets, Yellow-billed Nunbird, Lemon-throated Barbet, Southern Emerald Toucanet, Black-capped Parakeet, Peruvian Recurvebill, Sulphur-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, White-rumped Sirystes, and Black-and-white Tanager.



Bamboo Antshrike by Clayton Burne

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Not suitable for dedicated photographers; inexperienced birders; or anyone with mobility or health challenges.
Birding Ease		Quite demanding. Several rare or difficult target species.
Accommodation		Mostly comfortable, one lodge is rustic.
Walking / Trails		Moderate to challenging. Trails through terra firme forest have steep, muddy and wet areas, tree roots, improvised bridges over small streams.
Vehicles / Roads		Some long drives. Mostly sealed roads between towns, changing to dirt in remoter areas. The Acre extension has very bad roads with potholes and speed bumps.
Photography		Worthwhile, but challenging forest lighting conditions.
Annoyances		Temperatures are warm to hot with high humidity (very hot on the Acre extension), some rain showers to be expected. Small biting insects.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 13 on the Madeira & Tapajós tour;
- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 7 of Acre extension;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All local guiding services ;

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- No tips or gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities are NOT included on this tour. If you feel that your leader/s have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- We have timed our visit to coincide with the dry season and we can expect the weather conditions to be favourable, mostly dry, and sunny. However, it is generally hot and very humid in the lowlands and foothills. On most mornings, we will be up and out early to take advantage of the cooler temperatures and wildlife activity.
- This tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health as most of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- This tour is not suitable for novice birders or dedicated photographers.
- The vehicles we use are comfortable. Most roads are of a good standard, although we should expect some bumpy conditions when leaving the paved road.
- Roads leading to, and on the Acre extension are very poor.
- Accommodation is mostly of good to medium standard, the lodge at PiraAçu is rustic but comfortable.
- Air conditioning is available at most lodges.

Arrival and Departure Details

The main tour will begin with an arrival day in Porto Velho. The tour will conclude at Porto Velho Airport mid-morning on day 13.

The Acre extension will depart from Porto Velho after the main tour concludes. The extension will end after breakfast on day 7 at Rio Branco International Airport.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Governador Jorge Teixeira de Oliveira International Airport, Porto Velho (IATA: PVH) is the primary port of entry this tour and is well serviced by several Brazilian airlines via the international hubs of Sao Paulo, Brasilia, and Belo Horizonte. Rio Branco-Plácido de Castro International Airport (IATA: RBR) is the point of departure for the extension.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.