



# Remote Amazon Cruise trip report

27th August – 11th September 2016

By Tour Leader Chris Collins with assistance from Regina Ribeiro

Photos by Chris Collins

## Introduction

This was the second WildWings cruise in Remote Amazonia and the tour was a great success with a spectacular range of wildlife being seen. We spent much of the trip exploring along the Rio Negro and some of its tributaries, such as the amazing Jaú River, but also visited sites along the Amazon River itself.

On a trip such as this, everyone inevitably has their own highlights but the special experiences we shared included some incredible looks at Electric Eels, the opportunity to get in the water with wild Amazon River (or Pink) Dolphins, watch a Brazilian Porcupine on one of our night canoe rides and the spectacle of hundreds of skimmers and terns on a sandbank.

Inevitably birds were the most recorded group with a great range being seen including such desirable species as Hoatzin, Agami Heron, Sunbittern, Sungrebe, Bronzy Jacamar, Wire-tailed Manakin, Pompadour Cotinga, Spangled Cotinga and Capuchinbird. We also spent a percentage of our time looking for some of the extremely range-restricted species which can be found in this region and these found included Cherrie's Antwren, Klages's Antwren, Black-and-white Antbird and Varzea Piculet. Indeed, we also saw two 'species' which are yet to be formally described seeing the Amazon river island forms of Streaked Flycatcher and Plain Softtail.

The trip was, however, not just about birds and we also made a special effort to look for monkeys with 10 species being seen. Arguably the highlight was the reasonably localised Spix's Black-headed Uacari but others species seen included Spix's Night Monkey, White-faced Saki, Humboldt's and Guianan Squirrel Monkeys, Pied Tamarins and Guianan Brown Capuchins.

As well as the aforementioned Amazon River Dolphins, we also saw Tucuxi on a more or less daily basis as well as enjoying some decent looks at Giant Otters. Our reptile tally included three species of caimans, Black and Spectacled, as well as the much more rarely seen Schneider's Smooth-fronted Caiman.

It was definitely an extremely memorable trip and this introduction must also pay tribute to our fantastic crew who were led by the brilliant 'Junior'. He not only knew the areas we visited intimately but also had a seemingly unquenchable desire to share his knowledge of this remote region with us.

The following text describes our activities on a day-by-day basis and will hopefully bring back many happy memories for those who joined Regina and myself.

Chris Collins

September 2016

## **Itinerary**

### **27 August 2016**

Arrive Manaus. Local walk

### **28 August 2016**

Visit to Musa Tower and grounds of Tropical Hotel

Lunchtime: Board *Iracema*

Afternoon and Evening: 'Meeting of the waters' and Xiboraninha

### **29 August 2016**

Morning: Buffalo Island, Machado Island

Afternoon: cruising west on Amazon River

### **30 August 2016**

Morning: Marchantheria Island, near Manaus

Afternoon: Boto Rio Negro

Evening: Pagodão, Rio Negro

### **31 August 2016**

Morning: Anavilhanas archipelago

Afternoon: Novo Airão

### **1 September 2016**

Morning: Paraná do Jacaré, Rio Negro

Afternoon: Jaú National Park HQ, Igarapé Preto

### **2 September 2016**

Morning: Campina Trail/canoe ride, Jaú National Park

Afternoon: Cachoeira, cruising Jaú River

### **3 September 2016**

Morning: Manapana Springs

Afternoon: Boto Shortcut

### **4 September 2016**

Morning: Miratucu

Afternoon: Cachoeira

### **5 September 2016**

Morning: Cachoeira, cruising down Jaú River

Afternoon: Juçara

**6 September 2016**

Morning and Afternoon: Remanso and environs, including Capuchinbird trail

**7 September 2016**

Morning: Furo da Agua Boa, Rio Negro

Afternoon: cruising on Rio Negro and Paraná da Floresta

**8 September 2016**

Morning: Anavilhanas archipelago

Afternoon: Novo Airão, cruising on Rio Negro

**9 September 2016**

Morning: Igarapé Cachoeira

Afternoon: Campina, Jaradá Lake, Rio Cuieiras

**10 September 2015**

Morning: Pagodão

Afternoon: Disembark in Manaus

## Daily Log

### 27 August 2016

Shortly after the group met up at our hotel in the remote Amazonian city of Manaus, most people joined Regina and Chris for an introductory bird walk to a nearby small park. We started by checking a river opposite our hotel where Green Ibis, Blue-grey and Palm Tanagers, Great Kiskadee, Striated Heron and our first Green Iguana were seen.

Entering the park, we found a range of other species including Common Ground-dove, Pale-breasted Thrush, Neotropical Palm Swift, Glittering-throated Emerald, House Wren, Piratic Flycatcher and Red-capped Cardinal.

After a short stroll, most people headed back to the hotel but as we left the park both Grey-lined Hawk and Yellow-headed Caracara were seen flying by. A little later, everyone joined Regina and Chris for an introductory dinner. The main focus, however, was on the following morning when we would be boarding our specially chartered river boat, *Iracema*, and our expedition could really start.

### 28 August 2016

The day began early for everyone, with two options available – a visit to the grounds of the Tropical Hotel with Regina to look for Pied Tamarins or a slightly longer excursion with Chris and Junior to a nearby canopy tower.

The latter proved to be the more popular option and we spent a fantastic couple of hours watching from the 40+ metre high platform. This was a perfect place to view across the top of the forest canopy and the species seen included an impressive selection of parrots. Whilst Scarlet Macaw, Red-bellied Macaw, Blue-headed Parrot, Dusky Parrot and Mealy Parrot were all much appreciated, for many, the highlight was some decent looks at Red-fan Parrot, a new bird for just about the entire group.

Other species seen included Grey-headed Kite, Red-throated Caracara, Paradise Jacamar, Black-spotted Barbet and Red-legged Honeycreeper. An unexpected bonus were two species of monkeys with a couple of troops of Red Howler Monkeys being seen, as well as some nice looks at Pied Tamarin.

Whilst those with Chris were high up in the tree tops, Regina took the rest of the group to the grounds of the Tropical Hotel where their main target was to find Pied Tamarins and they were successful in finding these and getting some good views. A bigger surprise, however, was the discovery of a small group of White-faced Saki Monkeys, a species Regina had never seen before.

#### Pied Tamarin



By 09:30am both groups were back at the hotel and after a hearty breakfast, it was time to head to the dock to join *Iracema*. With this being in the grounds of the Tropical Hotel, Chris and

Regina suggested that everyone went to look for the Sakis and after only a few minutes of searching, we found them. Like the Pied Tamarins which live in the grounds of the hotel, the ancestors of these monkeys had become marooned when Manaus had expanded and they had quite literally become stuck in the hotel grounds.



### **White-faced Saki**

By 1:00pm it was time to head down to our home for the next couple of weeks, the extremely well appointed *Iracema* where Junior gave us a welcome aboard briefing. This was followed by a double helping of Caipirinha (a delicious mixture of sugar cane rum, lime and ice) and we were soon on our way passing under the 3,595 metre long Manaus bridge as we headed for the ‘meeting of the waters’. This spectacle occurs where the white water Solimoes River meets the black water Rio Negro and the dividing line between them was quite extraordinary.

We found several Large-billed Terns hunting where the waters met and a few moments later, our first pod of Pink River Dolphins were spotted. These dolphins were also hunting nearby and Junior explained that fish often got disoriented, as the acidity levels and nutrient contents were very different in the two rivers, and this

made it a favoured hunting ground for terns and dolphins.

As we cruised along towards our next destination, the unpronounceable Xiboraninha (!!), several new species were seen including Snowy Egret, Yellow-hooded Blackbird and Oriole Blackbird.

After cruising for a couple of hours, we set off on our first canoe trip of the expedition travelling down a narrow channel which was a great introduction to how we would spend much of the next couple of weeks.

Setting off an hour or so before dusk, we quickly found Barred Antshrike and Dark-breasted Spinetail and then our first Straight-billed Woodcreeper and Festive Amazon. As the sun disappeared, several Band-tailed Nighthawks flew by and our emphasis then changed to spotlighting for night birds and other nocturnal wildlife.

Amongst the highlights was a young Black Caiman which one of our ‘boat boys’ succeeded in grabbing and we were able to feel the skin of this amazing animal before it was quickly released back into the creek. The main reason Junior has brought us here, however, was to look for

Great Potoo and over the next couple of hours, we saw at least ten individuals – a truly extraordinary count for a bird which is only usually seen in much smaller numbers. As well as the potoos, some got to see their first Boat-billed Heron, whilst everyone saw several Three-toed Sloths.

After a couple of hours out in the channel, it was time to return to *Iracema* for a well-earned dinner. It had been a great start to our expedition.

## 29 August 2016

During the night we headed east passing Manaus in the late evening and shortly before dawn had arrived at one of the river islands at the mouth of the Madeira River.

Chris had explained that the reason for coming here was to look for a different suite of birds which were endemic to Amazonian river islands and we would not, therefore, see later in our trip when we travelled up the Rio Negro.



Shortly after 06:00am and with the light quickly improving, we set off in the three canoes and quickly found one of our targets, the extremely handsome Black-and-white Antbird. This responded well to a recording and everyone got some great views with a Red-and-white Spinetail then quickly added to our growing list.

### Varzea Piculet

Another of our main avian target was the Varzea Piculet, a tiny woodpecker with a very restricted range along the Amazon River and shortly after scrambling ashore, one of these was spotted working its way through some vine tangles. Just about everyone saw it and a little later a party of three piculets were found enabling those who had missed the initial bird to get some nice looks. With a roosting Common Potoo

also located, it was an excellent landing.

Returning to the canoes, we crossed to Machado Island (just dodging a large thunder storm) in the hope of finding Scaled Spinetail, however, the mosquitoes were pretty brutal and after a while the consensus was to beat a retreat and return to *Iracema* for breakfast. Nevertheless, the visit was highly successful with Leaden Antwren and Black-tailed Trogon being new for our list.

Despite the rising temperature, Junior was determined to show us the river island form of Plain Softtail (a potential split), so after cruising on *Iracema* for an hour or so, we were back in the canoes exploring some more channels. In places, these were somewhat clogged with vegetation and branches, but our canoe drivers successfully navigated around or over all the obstacles.

### Great Potoo



The trip started exceptionally well with two roosting Great Potoos being quickly followed by a couple of Horned Screemers and then a cracking male Glossy Antshrike. Continuing onwards, we entered an area of nice riverine forest and after persevering for a while, everyone got some decent looks at a couple of Cream-coloured Woodpeckers. Whilst these were highly responsive to the recordings and would fly back and forth across the channel, it was a challenge to get a clear view, as they always immediately disappeared deep into the vegetation. Eventually, however, we succeeded and everyone saw this stunning bird.

Returning downstream, another Varzea Piculet was spotted, as well as a pair of Black-capped Donacobiuses. There was, however, no sign of any softtails so Junior suggested we try another spot which involved disembarking the canoes and heading a short distance inland. His hunch was spot on, as after playing a recording for a matter of moments, a softtail flew in directly above us giving us some great views.



### **Black-capped Donacobius**

After disappearing for a few moments, it then reappeared along with two other individuals so it was very much 'job done' for the morning with the Varzea Piculet, Black-and-white Antbird and Plain Softtail seen by everyone.

By now, the sun was high in the sky and we reluctantly returned to *Iracema* for lunch and began the long ride westwards back towards Manaus and the Rio Negro.

The strong flow of the river which had benefitted us on the journey to Buffalo Island somewhat slowed us on the return journey but it was still a fascinating afternoon, with many of the group spending a large percentage of the time on the shady top deck looking for wildlife and, quite literally, watching the world go by.

There were plenty of small communities along the river and whilst this had inevitably led to a significant amount of clearance and habitat

destruction, there were still plenty of birds with Buff-necked Ibis, Yellow-billed Terns, Cocoi Heron, Black-collared Hawk, Chestnut-fronted Macaw amongst the species seen.

By 5:30pm, the sun was beginning to set and we enjoyed a spectacular sunset with dinner following an hour or so later.

After dinner, Junior showed us some satellite images outlining where we had been and as soon as the wildlife log concluded, many took the opportunity to have an early night. It had been an excellent and varied day with the prospect of some interesting places for the morning.

**30 August 2016**

The day began in the regular manner with Junior playing opera over the PA system at 05:30am and about 45 minutes later we set off in the three canoes. Cruising along a small channel, we found an extremely obliging Osprey and then several Collared Plovers.

We were soon ashore on a relatively new sandy island where there were huge numbers of Black Skimmers and Large-billed Terns. There were also plenty of Yellow-billed Terns and a selection of migratory North American waders including White-rumped, Baird's and Least Sandpipers and a lone Greater Yellowlegs.

Our main target, however, was the somewhat localised Parker's Spinetail and not long after we reached the reeds, a spinetail was spotted. This was utterly disinterested in Chris' recordings but it was indeed the correct species and a new bird for just about everyone.



### **Black Skimmers, Large-billed Terns and Yellow-billed Terns**

As well as the spinetail, an Amazonian Black Tyrant was found – again a new bird for most – so it had been a highly successful excursion and we headed back to *Iracema* well satisfied with our early morning excursion.

Whilst we enjoyed another tasty breakfast in the Rainbow Restaurant, the crew repositioned *Iracema* to an older river island, where the vegetation was a lot more advanced. We were given an impressive demonstration of the flexibility of our vessel, as instead of needing the canoes to land, the Captain gently nudged the bow into the sandy bank and we were able to walk ashore along a gangplank.

Some of the crew went ahead to cut a trail whilst we stood in the shade of a glade of Cecropia trees and searched for birds, finding some Streaked Flycatchers and Bicoloured Conebills. Our main goal, however, was to find Castelnau's Antshrike, another fairly localised species which is only found along the Amazon and some of its larger tributaries. Junior and Chris, therefore, led us down the newly cut path and an antshrike was soon heard.

We positioned ourselves in the hope that it would give us some good views, but the bird clearly had other ideas and although everyone got glimpses as it moved through the thick vegetation, it was not easy to see well.

By 11:00am, it was time to head off and we spent a pleasant few hours cruising towards our afternoon destination, the appropriately named 'Boto Rio Negro' which Junior had told us was where we would have the opportunity to get in the water with wild Amazon River Dolphins.

There was a floating platform and we were soon shuttled across by our canoe drivers. After a short briefing on how to behave with the dolphins (touching blow holes was, for example, not allowed), everyone had the opportunity to stand on a submerged section of the platform with the dolphins swimming between us.



It was an amazing experience and it really felt like these wild animals were choosing to interact with us. Whilst the dolphins were given a few small fish to eat, these were little more than a light snack for such a substantial animal and it was a real privilege to be with animals which seemed utterly relaxed at our presence. Occasionally, the dolphins would brush against us and they seemed perfectly content if we gently patted their flanks.

### **Amazon River Dolphin**

After an hour, we reluctantly returned to *Iracema*. Although we were only a few days into our trip, we knew we had just experienced one of the undoubted highlights. It was a truly great example of community ecotourism, with the local people now having a real incentive to protect the dolphins rather than catching them for food and catfish bait.

After dinner, another night time excursion was offered and we were soon travelling down a channel with terra firme forest on

both sides. The first creature of note was a Tree Boa which was hanging in some branches overhanging the water and a few minutes later, we found a young Grey Four-eyed Opossum which sat quietly whilst the three canoes manoeuvred so everyone could get a good look. Occasionally, the opossum would move a little and we could see it use its prehensile tail as it clambered around.

### **Grey Four-eyed Opossum**

We also had some great looks at two species of frogs with the first of these being a Smoky Jungle Frog which Junior scrambled out of the canoe and grabbed, so we could see it up close. A little later, we found a



huge Cane Toad amongst the leaf litter. This species is amongst the most successful frogs in the world and as well as living across much of tropical Central and South America, it has been introduced into Australia where, unfortunately, it is causing havoc as the chemicals it secretes from its skin are highly toxic to the native amphibians.



### **Smoky Jungle Frog**

For many, however, the highlight was a Brazilian Porcupine which we found clambering through the trees several metres above us. Seemingly convinced that we could not see it, it sat on an open branch giving us a fantastic opportunity to watch this infrequently seen animal.



### **Brazilian Porcupine**

By 10:00pm it was time to head back to the boat and begin our journey up the Rio Negro towards the Anavilhanas Archipelago.

**31 August 2016**

During the night, we continued our navigation up the Rio Negro and well before dawn *Iracema* was moored (as usual to a tree !!) in the Anavilhanas Archipelago. The area comprises hundreds of river islands, indeed it is the largest riverine archipelago in the world, and shortly after 06:00am we set off in the canoes to explore.



#### **Klages's Antwren - male**

One of our goals was to locate some of the specialties of the region and the first of these to be found was Klages's Antwren, a species which is classified as 'near threatened' by Birdlife International. This species is highly localised being only found in a small part of Central Amazonian Brazil and was, therefore, one of our major targets for the morning. Whilst some antwrens can be far from obliging, everyone had some good views of a pair which responded well to a recording. The male was a mass of black-and-white streaks and not dissimilar from an oversized mint humbug. Although the female was not dissimilar, her streaking was a little more subdued with an orange-brown wash on her belly.

As we were watching the antwrens, a couple of Blue-and-yellow Macaws flew overhead and a little later we found a group of Hoatzins. This was another new bird for many, which truly looked like it was a missing link between dinosaurs and modern birds, and we enjoyed some decent looks as the birds clambered around through the vegetation.



#### **Klages's Antwren - female**

The new species continued at a healthy rate with *Varzea Schiffornis* and a pair of Yellow-throated Woodpeckers soon found. Another 'ant thing' which was spotted was Black-chinned Antbird and we watched several individuals seemingly having a territorial dispute.

After returning to *Ircema* for breakfast, we set off again to visit a spot Junior knew for Wire-tailed Manakin but, unfortunately, despite searching we

were unable to locate this colourful species – we would have to hope to find it later in our expedition.....

Our journey upstream then continued and many of the group took the opportunity to spend most of the time on the shady top deck watching the forest. The hot conditions meant the weather was ideal for birds of prey and we found a distant Black Hawk-eagle circling with the

vultures.



**Sphinx Moth caterpillar**

By mid-afternoon we had reached the small town of Novo Airão and once the temperature had moderated, we boarded the canoes for the short ride to a property Junior's family owned. This had been converted into a hotel, however, our reason for visiting was because there was a family of Spix's Night Monkeys which lived in the grounds and within a matter of moments of landing on the sandy shore, we were watching these rarely seen primates, having also seen the spectacular caterpillar of the Sphinx Moth near our landing site.



**Spix's Night Monkeys**

There was a large hole in a tree and although it was still light, three individuals were peering out. They seemed utterly relaxed with twenty people standing nearby and through the telescopes we could get some incredible views.

Climbing up to the main buildings, we enjoyed some fruit juice on the veranda and as the light began to fade several White-throated Toucans flew through the gardens seemingly on their way to their night time roost.



### **Pink-toed Tarantula**

Before returning to *Iracema* for dinner, however, Junior wanted to show us some Pink-toed Tarantulas, with the first of these being found inside the family house !!! We then wandered around the grounds finding several more before riding back to Iracema for dinner, the log and an early night.

### **1 September 2016**

It was the earliest start of our trip so far and at 05:00am the three canoes left *Iracema* for a pre-dawn excursion. The idea was to be out on the river well before first light and experience dawn as the forest began to awake.

We drifted down the east bank of the Rio Negro and with a starry sky overhead, we listening for sounds coming from the forest. As the sky began to lighten, we turned into a side channel and were paddled along hearing a selection of birds including Crestless Curassow, Black-chinned Antbird and Yellow-rumped Cacique. Several Band-tailed Nighthawks also flew overhead and one canoe saw a Pauraque.

Continuing onwards, a few lucky individuals had a brief view of a Crestless Curassow and a few moments later, one of the canoes had a brief encounter with a family party of Black Curassows which were quietly walking across the forest floor.

Further along, we located a Sneathlidge's Tody-tyrant which showed well in response to a recording and then a pair of Zimmer's Woodcreepers. New birds were certainly coming thick and fast this morning.

A mixed troop of monkeys was also seen containing Guianan Bearded Saki, Humboldt's White-faced Capuchin and Guianan Brown Capuchin and with Green-backed Trogon in the same area, the cruise was arguably our most successful to date.



### **Iracema**

After four hours out in the canoes, we returned to *Iracema* for a well-deserved breakfast and then began our journey towards Jaú National Park. This was expected to take about 4 hours and many of the group headed to the top deck to watch for wildlife, as we passed mile after miles of pristine forest. Despite it being the heat of the day, it was extremely pleasant under our boat's canopy and we found a nice selection of species including Tucuxi Dolphins, Channel-billed Toucan and Great Black Hawk.



### **Large-billed Tern**

As lunch concluded, we arrived at the Jaú National Park Headquarters and everyone had to go ashore, sign in and have their passports compared against the official permit Junior had collected the previous day at Novo Airão. This process was soon completed and before continuing up the river, we went for a short walk to enjoy a group of butterflies which were taking nutrients from the clay just above the waterline. Most of them were one of the Sulphur Butterflies, although with

many lookalike species in this family, we could not be sure precisely which one we were watching.



### **Sulphur Butterflies**

Once everyone had enjoyed their fill of the butterflies, we returned to *Iracema* and began our navigation up the Jaú River. This is widely regarded as one of the most pristine national parks within the Amazon and at 272 million hectares (5,500 square miles), we knew that we would only be able to explore a tiny fraction of this vast wilderness.

After sailing upstream for another hour or so, we boarded the canoes for a late afternoon ride and almost as soon as we had set off, Junior heard a Blue-crowned Trogon calling. A quick blast of a recording was all that was required and the bird quickly appeared. A couple of Long-billed Woodcreepers also put on a good show before we continued up the creek Junior wanted to explore.

With thunder rumbling in the background and a somewhat leaden sky, birding was rather slow but nevertheless we found some interesting species with some excellent views of Ladder-tailed Nightjar. There were several of these roosting close to the channel edge and we had some great looks as they sat on exposed snags or flew close to the canoes.

As the sun began to set, we returned to *Iracema* and as we continued upstream, we enjoyed another excellent dinner in the Rainbow Restaurant.

## 2 September 2016

The day began extremely early for some of the keener birders with an optional excursion to look for Rufous Potoo. This left *Iracema* at 04:00am and Chris and Junior had warned everyone that this would involve spending much of the time standing silently in the dark in the hope that we could locate a calling bird.

With a thunderstorm having gone through just a few hours before, unfortunately, there was no response to the recordings, so as the sky began to lighten we returned to the vessel for breakfast.

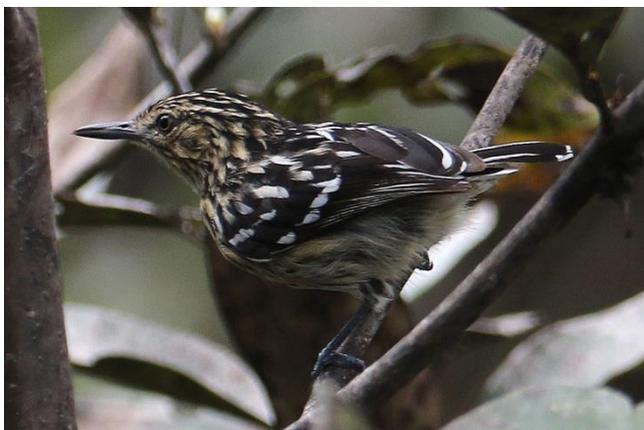
As soon as everyone had eaten their fill, two options were offered with some joining Chris on a walk through the forest looking for birds, whilst others went out in the canoes with Regina and Junior.

Both had a very successful time, with the highlight for the birders being Pavonine Quetzal. Although this was initially somewhat flighty, it eventually settled in a good position and everyone was able to get some nice looks through the telescope as it sat high in the canopy. Other species seen included Mouse-coloured Antshrike, Spix's Guan and a Rio Negro Brush-tailed Rat, a reasonably localised and rarely seen species.

### **Black-faced Nunbird**

Whilst Chris' group was in the forest, Regina and Junior explored some channels off the Jaú River finding Guianan Brown Capuchin, Sharp-nosed Bat, Northern Caiman Lizard, Green-and-Rufous Kingfisher, Pomapadour Cotinga, Chestnut Woodpecker and Sungrebe.

By 09:00am, however, the sky began to darken so both groups retreated to the safety of *Iracema* whilst a storm passed by.



### **Cherrie's Antwren – female**

As soon as the rain had finished, a mid-morning canoe ride was offered and this proved highly successful with a family party of Pompadour Cotingas being found, as well as a pair of the highly localised Cherrie's Antwrens which were building a nest in a small tree. A little later, we found Chestnut Woodpecker and Pearly-breasted Cuckoo so despite the storm, it was an excellent morning.

All too soon, it was time to continue our journey and shortly before lunch, there was a shout from the bridge to inform us that the Captain had spotted a Spix's Black-headed Uacari. He quickly turned *Iracema* around and Junior set off in a canoe into the flooded forest to see if he could locate these much wanted primates.



There was, however, no need for us to get into the other canoes as a few moments later, a small troop of these highly localised and spectacular monkeys were spotted. They were moving through the forest parallel to the river, so we were able to follow them and get some great views from the top deck. To our surprise we then realised that the uacaris were travelling with a group of squirrel monkeys and as we were now on the west bank of the Rio Negro, these were another new species for our list, Humboldt's Squirrel Monkey.

#### **Spix's Black-headed Uacari**

A little later, we came to the small community of Cachoeira where Junior and Chris went ashore to discuss plans with one of the villagers whilst *Iracema* continued slowly upstream. As Junior and Chris were returning to the vessel, a couple of Giant Otters were spotted swimming quietly along through the vegetation close to the riverbank. It only

took a matter of moments for our obliging bridge team to turn our trusty vessel around and we slowly tracked the otters as they moved down the river. At one point and much to everyone's surprise, Junior made some extraordinary screeching sounds and this certainly worked, as the otters showed themselves a couple more times before finally disappearing into the vegetation.

Continuing upstream, we learnt that we were heading for an area which Junior had only visited on a couple of previous occasions. We learnt that only a few hundred tourists had ever been to this remote part of the Jaú River, indeed more people had probably been to the top of Everest in 2016 than had ever explored this region – we truly were entering a special place.

As we cruised onwards, it was very apparent that the forest type was changing and it became significantly shorter in stature. The area was clearly fantastic for herons, as we saw dozens and dozens of Striated Herons, as well as the occasion Rufescent Tiger Heron and somewhat unexpectedly a couple of Great Egrets. It was a true privilege to be travelling into such a remote region and many people spent a large percentage of the afternoon on the top deck as, once again, we passed mile after mile of pristine forest.

As well as the herons, we had some decent looks at three Blue-and-Yellow Macaws as they flew overhead and a Great Black Hawk carrying a recent kill. With multiple parties of dolphins

in the river, it was an extremely memorable afternoon and as the sun set, good numbers of Band-tailed Nighthawks began to appear.



### **Band-tailed Nighthawks**

Following the nightly wildlife log and a delicious barbeque on the top deck, we set off in the three canoes for a night time excursion. Junior had explained that this area was good for Schneider's Smooth-fronted Caimans and after a short while, there was an excited call from him over the radios to inform Chris and Regina that he had found one. This was sitting on the bank less than a metre or so from the water's edge and we were able to get some great views of this rarely seen reptile.



### **Schneider's Smooth-fronted Caiman**

The caiman was, however, not the only new animal for the excursion as all three boats also managed to see a Paca, which is the second largest rodent in the world and apparently considered the best 'bush meat' in the Amazon.

Several good birds were also found including both

Capped and Boat-billed Herons and when we returned to *Iracema* well after 11:00pm we knew it had been an excellent, if rather long, day.

### 3 September 2016

Shortly after a 06:00am breakfast, the three canoes set off to explore a creek which Junior had told us included an area of rapids. We had only been gone for a short while when the skies began to darken rapidly and the decision was taken that we should abort and return to *Iracema*. This proved to be a wise move, as the heavens quite literally opened and it poured heavily for most of the morning.

Many took the opportunity to relax but a few hardy individuals went out with Junior and some of our 'boat boys' to fish for Peacock Bass. Despite the weather, this was highly successful with several fish being caught including one which weighed seven kilogrammes !!!

By late morning, the rain had finally eased up and we decided to use *Iracema* as a floating canopy platform and slowly cruise down the creek and out onto the Jaú River looking for wildlife from the top deck. Various birds were perched up drying themselves after the storm and highlights included a party of Ivory-billed Aracaris, as well as Pompadour Cotinga and a fantastic Spangled Cotinga which remained perched on a bare snag for several minutes allowing us to have some great views through telescopes on the top deck.

As we continued down the Jaú River, some distant monkeys were spotted and these proved to be a troop of Spix's Black-headed Uacaris – our second sighting of this highly localised species in two days.



#### **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**

By late afternoon, we had reached a spot where Junior knew a short cut off the main river and we followed this in the canoes. Although this was a little quiet at times, there were still some good sightings with three Ferruginous Pygmy-owls being the most notable. Whilst two of these were rather hidden in the vegetation, one of them was extremely obliging and remained perched on a series of open snags, allowing us some excellent views and great photo opportunities.

Returning to *Iracema*, we continued our journey down the Jaú River and after dark there was another optional trip in the canoes to look for nightlife. This proved to be highly productive with two Pacas being found. Some people were also fortunate to see what appeared to be a Green Acouchi, a small rodent Junior had not seen previously.

### 4 September 2016

During the night, *Iracema* remained in the same location and after another early breakfast, we headed out on the river. Almost immediately, we heard a Strong-billed Woodcreeper calling

so all three canoes were quietly manoeuvred into the flooded forest so we could look for this jumbo-sized woodcreeper. Initially the views were a little frustrating, as the birds moved from tree to tree rarely giving us an opportunity to see them well. Eventually, however, our perseverance paid off and everyone got some good views. Compared with some of the other woodcreepers we had seen, we could see that Strong-billed was significantly larger, with different streaking compared with the other species we had found before.

Our main objective for the morning, however, was to go for a walk in some terra firme forest but with no one living in the area, we needed to make our own trail. As a result, we dropped off a couple of our obliging 'boat boys' and they set off with their machetes, whilst we continued exploring the area by canoe.

After an hour or so, we returned to the spot where we had left our trail makers and they had done a great job cutting a route through the forest for us. The trail wandered through some fantastic terra firme forest and the first birds we found were White-crowned Manakin and Mouse-coloured Antshrike.

A little further along, we encountered a mixed flock and Chris began playing a recording of Cinerous Antshrike explaining that this species was generally the flock leader. As a result, the birds hung around for several minutes and we attempted to get to grips with as many of them as possible. Mixed feeding flocks can be somewhat frustrating, with plenty of calls but only brief views of the birds as they move about, but we persevered and found a range of species. These included Wing-barred Piprites, White-flanked Antwren, Fasciated Antshrike, Forest Elaenia and the aforementioned Cinereous Antshrike.

The flock eventually moved on and we continued along the trail finding Emerson and Darlan sitting by a modest sized mud wallow they had found. This was clearly regularly used by some of the forest dwelling animals and Junior said it was likely that both Tapirs and Pecarries used it.

Whilst Chris and Junior were on the trail, Regina led a trip in the canoes for those who preferred a water-based experience and this proved highly successful with Pompadour Cotinga, Brown-throated Parakeet, Green-and-rufous Kingfisher and several species of Morpho butterflies all being seen. For those who enjoyed plants, another highlight was finding a Devon's Galeandra, a pretty brown, white and pink orchid.

By mid-morning, everyone had met up at the trailhead and we began motoring back towards *Iracema* in the canoes. As we rounded a bend in the river, a bird was spotted perched in a tree but being backlit, it was difficult to see what species it was. Approaching closer, Chris tried playing Amazonian Antshrike and his suspicion as to the bird's identity proved to be correct, as a pair of birds responded almost immediately to the recording. Whilst the male remained largely hidden, the female was more obliging and we had some great views of her, as she occasionally sat on open branches singing back. With her orange head and otherwise largely pied plumage, this was certainly one of the more distinctive of the 'ant things' we had encountered.

Returning to *Iracema*, we continued our journey downstream to Cachoeira village and after Regina, Chris and Junior had spoken with one of the local landowners, they announced that there would be two options for the afternoon, a walk on a forest trail or a trip in the canoes.

The majority of the group opted for the latter and the undoubted highlight was an obliging pair of Bronzy Jacamars. This species is somewhat more range-restricted than many other jacamar species and was a new bird for everyone. As well as the jacamars, other species included some nice looks at Capped Heron,

Whilst Chris and Regina were leading the canoe trip, Junior took the rest of the group on a walk through the forest. Although this was relatively quiet, a lucky few saw a large tan coloured shape disappear off into the forest – a frustratingly brief sighting of the almost mythical Nocturnal Curassow.....

As well as this, the hikers also found the nest of a Blackish Nightjar which had decided to lay its eggs on the edge of the trail.

### **Solitary Sandpiper**

As dusk approached, all three canoes met up and we watched a couple of Solitary Sandpipers chasing each other in front of our local guide's house. The birds seemed utterly oblivious to our presence and, on occasions, flew within a matter of inches of us. Although it was getting rather gloomy, it was a great opportunity to get some photos of this North American migrant.



Once everyone was back aboard, Chris explained that the night time option would be a walk on the trail in the hope of relocating the curassow which had been seen earlier. This set off a little before 08:30pm and despite playing recordings of the birds in the same area, unfortunately, there was no response. Indeed, with the exception of various insects and a Great Tinamou which called briefly, the forest was remarkable silent, although with the sighting of a South American Lancehead (a member of the fer-de-lance family) and a Blackish Nightjar it had certainly been a worthwhile excursion.

### **5 September 2016**

Following a 05:30am wake up, we set off a little after 06:00am with two options being offered, a walk with Regina on the 'Curassow Trail' or a canoe trip with Junior and Chris.

On this occasion, the group split almost 50:50 and those who went out on the river found a couple of new species for the trip, with the highlight being some nice looks at an American Pygmy Kingfisher. This diminutive kingfisher is the smallest in the Americas and was the last of the five species we could expect to find on our expedition.

Other species seen included a pair of Yellow-throated Woodpeckers, Crane Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Green Ibis, Rufescent Tiger Heron and Mealy Parrot, however, for many the most memorable experience was on our return to *Iracema* when our 'boat boys' paddled us through

a flooded forested river island. With the trees reasonably close together, our route was somewhat circuitous but it was an amazing experience nonetheless.

Whilst Junior and Chris led the canoe trip, Regina took those who had opted to walk the trail into the forest. Although there was no sign of the curassows, a great range of other species were seen including Blue-crowned Manakin, Golden-headed Manakin, Black-billed Thrush, Cream-coloured Woodpecker, Pearly-breasted Cuckoo, Little Woodpecker and Wedge-billed Woodcreeper. A new mammal for the trip was also found, with brief views of the melanistic form of a Northern Amazon Red Squirrel.

By 09:20am everyone was back on *Iracema* and after breakfast in the Rainbow Restaurant, many headed to the top deck to enjoy the view and look for wildlife. Once again, we passed mile after mile of primary forest and it was all too easy to forget how privileged we were to be in such a remote and special place.

With broken cloud in the sky and a gentle breeze blowing as we continued downstream, conditions were extremely pleasant on the top deck and a nice selection of species were found including Black Caracara, Crane Hawk, Plumbeous Kite, Greater Yellow-headed Vulture, White-throated Toucan and our first Masked Tityra of the trip. As lunch approached, the highlight of the morning was spotted, a fine Orange-breasted Falcon which was sitting in a tree not far from the river bank.

As soon as the bridge team were alerted, they turned *Iracema* round and we headed back towards the bird. Whilst it flew off when we were still a couple of hundred metres away, nevertheless, everyone who was ‘topside’ had some nice views of this rare species and were able to see the differences in jizz from the Bat Falcon we had found a couple of days before.



The new birds continued, however, with two King Vultures being found. These were soaring somewhat distantly but their distinctive upper wing pattern could be easily seen – it had certainly been a highly productive morning.

### **Hoatzin**

Whilst lunch was being served, we checked out of the National Park and crossed the Rio Negro to our afternoon destination. Arriving at 2:30pm, Chris and Junior concluded it was too hot to go out immediately, so there was an hour to relax and have a siesta. The departure was then delayed for a further half an hour by a rain squall but at 4:00pm with the weather set fair once again, the three canoes set off to explore a channel not far off the Rio Negro.

It was a very productive afternoon with a good range of species being found including American Pygmy Kingfisher, Blue-tailed Emerald, Black Nunbird, Striped Woodcreeper, Black-crested Antshrike, Black-chinned Antbird, Blue Dacnis and Purple Honeycreeper. For many, however, their personal highlight were some great views of a Hoatzin. Whilst we had

already seen this species earlier in the expedition, on this occasion, the bird was extremely obliging and sat in full view for several minutes.



**Gladiator Tree Frog**

After another excellent dinner and the nightly bird and mammal log, the canoes headed out for a night time excursion to visit the same waterways we had explored earlier in the afternoon. Although it was a somewhat quiet experience compared to some of our other night trips, we had some nice looks at Boat-billed Heron, Gladiator Tree Frog and heard a Giant Bamboo Rat. By 9:45pm everyone was back aboard *Iracema* and the crew set a course for our morning excursion, a walk to a lek of the highly prized Capuchinbird.

### **6 September 2016**

By dawn, *Iracema* was tied up close to the small village of Remanso and as soon as there was sufficient light, Junior went ashore to find a local guide to lead us to the Capuchinbird lek. The gentleman was soon located and he and Junior soon returned to *Iracema* along with two huge Piraracu which had been caught the previous day. Junior had agreed to purchase the fish and the larger of the two was well over 5 feet long and weighed in excess of 25 kilograms !!!

As soon as the canoe was secured, we set off to the trailhead and there were good numbers of fish-eating birds with dozens of Great Egrets, plenty of Ospreys, as well as Capped Herons, Striated Herons and Cocoi Herons. For those on the top deck, the major highlight, however, were three Bare-necked Fruitcrows which showed well but briefly as they flew across our bow.

Two options were available with the majority joining Regina and Chris on an extended hike to look for the Capuchinbirds, however, a third of the group opted for a canoe ride with Junior exploring some of the nearby channels. This proved very successful with a couple of new birds for the trip being found, namely Crowned Slaty Flycatcher and Plain-crowned Spinetail, as well as Spot-breasted Woodpecker, two Bat Falcons and some Caica Parrots.

Whilst Junior's canoe was out on the water, those with Chris and Regina set off with the local guide to the Capuchinbird site. It was a fairly brisk walk which lasted almost 50 minutes and we eventually stopped close to a huge emergent Brazil nut tree. Chris played the recording

multiple times but there was no response, so with some of the group concerned that this key bird might prove to be harder to find than they had anticipated, we walked back along the trail to another spot where the birds were known to gather.

Almost as soon as the recording was played here, there was a response, and over the next half hour or so, we watched as at least two Capuchinbirds flew back and forth through the forest canopy. It could be challenging to get a decent view but most people eventually saw at least one of the birds perched.

Whilst we were searching for the Capuchinbird, Tony and Darlan arrived and Darlan mentioned to Regina that he and Tony had seen a large eagle only fifteen minutes before a few hundred metres back down the trail. Looking at the photos, it was apparent that this was definitely worth looking for, so we hurried back down the trail in the hope that it was still present.

Initially our hopes were dashed but it was then spotted high up in the treetops but almost as soon it was found, it flew off. Hoping that it had not gone far, Chris asked our eagle-eyed 'boat boys' to see if they could relocate it and a few moments later, we were hurrying to a small clearing where the eagle could be seen.

It was still high above us but there was a bit of a window which allowed us to see it through the telescope. Initially it was thought the bird might well be a young Crested Eagle but subsequent examination of photos showed it was an immature Ornate Hawk Eagle.

After watching the eagle for at least ten minutes, it flew off and our guides recommended that we leave the forest, as they anticipated that heavy rain was coming and sure enough it soon began to pour. Arriving at the landing site, we were able to wait under a small shelter for the worst of the weather to pass through and whilst this delayed our return to *Iracema*, everyone was very happy with their time on the trail.

By late morning, everyone was back on *Iracema* and as soon as the weather had improved, we slowly cruised downstream looking for birds and other wildlife. One of the first species to be seen was a Great Black Hawk which looked extremely wet and bedraggled as it sat on an exposed snag close to the river bank – it seemed to be waiting for some sunshine to dry out....

Other birds seen included a Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Green-tailed Jacamar and for a lucky few a Black-and-white Hawk Eagle.

With the sky somewhat cloudy and the temperature lowered by the earlier rain, at 2:30pm we set out on an afternoon canoe ride. Almost immediately, a troop of more than twenty Brown Capuchins were seen. Further along, an Agami Heron was found but this proved extremely elusive and whilst four individuals were glimpsed over the afternoon, none of them offered good views or were seen by everyone – we would have to hope for better views later in the trip....



### **Slate-coloured Hawk**

Despite the frustrations with the herons, it was still an excellent trip with great looks at a very showy male Spangled Cotinga and a nicely perched Slate-coloured Hawk. Other species seen included Dark-billed Cuckoo, Cinnamon Attila, a couple of American Pygmy Kingfishers and a Guianan Puffbird.

### **7 September 2016**

As the sun began to rise, we left the spot where we had been tied up since the previous afternoon and sailed down the Rio Negro for half an hour or so. As soon as *Iracema* was close to the creek Junior wanted to explore, we boarded the three canoes and headed off. Our route took us along a series of channels and during the morning we passed areas with both

flooded varzea and terra firme forest.

It was an amazing ride and, on occasions, we had to weave around fallen trees lying across almost the entire waterway. Indeed, from time to time, our path was completely blocked but our boat crew were totally undaunted and set to work with their machetes to clear a path. Many would have turned around, but it seemed nothing would deter Junior and his excellent team.

Our main goal for the morning was to find Agami Heron and towards the end of the trip we found several different birds with all the canoes getting good looks. At least four individuals were seen – an impressive total for what is generally a fairly difficult bird to find in South America.



### **Agami Heron**

Another goal for the morning was Sunbittern, a species we had previously heard but not seen but this time our luck was in and we had some good views of a lone individual as it walked quietly along the muddy edge under the trees calling occasionally.



### **Sunbittern**

Sadly we also encountered an abandoned fishing net at the same location and when this was pulled up there was a dead Matamata Turtle in it. Although we were able to get some good looks at this rarely seen animal, it was tragic to think it had drowned in such an unfortunate way.

As well as the Agamis and Sunbittern, an excellent selection of other birds were seen including Black Hawk Eagle, Sungrebe, Orange-cheeked Parrot,

Strong-billed Woodcreeper and Tropical Gnatcatcher. Several new species for our expedition were also noted including Ringed Woodpecker and Reddish Hermit.

The trip was also an opportunity for some to catch up on Wire-tailed Manakin as two birds were found as we cruised along, however, the morning was also very much about being in a fantastic forest and with hundreds of butterflies and untouched forest on both banks, it was a very memorable trip.

By 11:00am we were back on *Iracema* and our excellent kitchen team almost immediately served us a tasty 'brunch'. We had spent a lot longer in the canoes than had been anticipated (due to the fallen trees which had blocked our path) but it had certainly been an excellent excursion.



### **Red-fan Parrot**

For the rest of the day, we cruised down the Rio Negro and also made a short detour to visit an area where Junior knew there had been a Harpy Eagle nest but sadly our hopes of finding this bird were not fulfilled. Nevertheless, it was a highly productive afternoon and as well as watching from the top deck, many took the opportunity to catch up on sleep or generally relax.

Birdwise, the highlight was some great views of Red-fan Parrot which were found shortly before dusk. Initially a lone bird was spotted perched on a broken tree trunk and our skilful bridge team turned *Iracema* and headed towards where the bird was sitting. Whilst this individual flew off, we then realised that there were a couple of heads peering out of a hole in

the trunk – it was another pair of Red-fan Parrots which were presumably nesting !!!

It then became apparent that this dead tree was the avian equivalent of a condominium, as there was another head peering out of another hole – the Red-fan Parrots had a neighbour, a Lineated Woodpecker which was presumably nesting a matter of feet below them.

### **8 September 2016**

During the night we continued travelling down the Rio Negro and well before dawn *Iracema* was tied up in the Anavilhanas archipelago. After a 5:30am breakfast, we set off in the canoes with two particular targets in mind, Wire-tailed Manakin and Amazonian Umbrellabird.

We had only got a few hundred metres from the boat when we heard some manakins calling and Junior suggested we land and look for them. Scrambling up the riverbank, we were soon on the flat in some fantastic terra firme forest.

It only took a few moments to locate the manakins and it then became apparent that we had chosen a perfect place, as there were several males and they were displaying to a female. Whilst she was a somewhat drab green, the males were certainly a serious candidate for bird of the trip with their brilliant yellow breasts, red caps and glistening black backs.

The males seemed to have preferred branches to display on and we could put the telescopes on these and enjoy their ‘dances’ as they jumped back and forth. On a few occasions, the female would get close to a particular male and the display would become even more frenetic with his feathers also ruffled up.

We stayed for an hour and once everyone had had their fill of these beautiful birds, we returned to the canoes to continue our exploration. We had only got a matter of another few hundred metres when there was a call on the radios to tell everyone that an Amazonian Umbrellabird had been located.



The canoes quickly manoeuvred to maximise everyone’s chances of seeing this special bird and almost the entire group managed some views before it dropped out of sight. With its incredible crest and huge wattle, it was certainly another spectacular species.

### **Plumbeous Kite**

After such an amazing start to this particular canoe ride, it was going to be hard keeping up the momentum, but the rest of the morning was still a great success with a range of species being seen including Grey-headed Kite, Short-crested Flycatcher and Guianan Tyrannulet.

had told us that some additional had an hour or so to relax (or head before continuing onwards down the

### **Turkey Vulture**

Our next destination was on the afternoon we turned off the Rio Negro passing a number of small riverside really remote Amazon region was, end. Despite this, there was still and there were good numbers of birds species we had seen in the days closer Cowbirds and Turkey Vultures, there a couple of trees which were stuffed full of Purple Martins.



By mid-morning we were all back aboard *Iracema* and our next destination was the small town of Novo Airão. Junior supplies were needed, so we ashore to buy an ice-cream !!) Rio Negro.

Cuieiras River and late in the and cruised up the Cuieiras communities – our time in the unfortunately, coming to an plenty of intact forest to enjoy about. Whilst many were to Manaus, such as Giant were a few surprises including

After dinner and the nightly log, we headed out to look for nightlife but with lightning flashing in the distance, it was always going to be a longshot for owls and potoos. We did, however, manage to find a number of frogs with several enormous Cane Toads being spotted, as well as a good number of Gladiator Tree Frogs. By 10:30pm and with the storm seemingly approaching, we headed back to *Iracema*.

**9 September 2016**

It was our final full day on *Iracema* and after a 5:30am breakfast, we headed out in the three canoes. The area was unlike anywhere else we had visited so far and initially resembled a giant lake, with the occasional tree emerging out of the water.

After exploring this area for a short while, we turned into a creek (albeit the banks were still underwater) and had a considerable surprise when a Red-billed Scythebill was spotted. Although this species is reasonably widespread, it is rarely easy to find and Junior told us it was the first time he had seen one in this area. Whilst the bird was calling regularly and stayed for a fair time, it was a challenge to get a good look at it but most of the group eventually saw it, even if it was a somewhat composite view, as only parts of it were generally visible through the vegetation.

Continuing upstream, we passed a mixture of flooded and unflooded varzea as well as terra firme forest and in places where the banks were exposed, we could see that the soils were sandy in nature. The forest also had a much lower canopy than some of the other areas we had visited.

As we continued onwards, Junior spotted an Electric Eel and all three canoes began searching for this special Amazon creature. It quickly became apparent that we had found a veritable eel hotspot, with at least fifteen individuals present and we watched as they would rise to the surface through the black tea coloured water, seemingly gulp a breath of air, and then sink again out of sight.

### **Electric Eel**

It was a veritable game of cat and mouse as we had to guess where the eels would come up next but everyone enjoyed some fantastic views, with Junior explaining that these extraordinary creatures could generate a charge of 500 volts which was more than sufficient to stun their prey.



**Iracema**

All too soon, it was time to head back downstream and not long after we were all safely back on *Iracema* the skies darkened and there was an extremely heavy rain shower. Our 'boat boys' however, seemed utterly oblivious to the conditions and headed off on a short fishing excursion whilst most of the group headed to the Rainbow Restaurant for tea and cake.



### **Red-fan Parrots**

When the rain stopped about 45 minutes later, our trusty fishermen returned to the boat with a sizeable bucket of Peacock Bass – fishing in the rain had clearly been very successful. They were, however, a little disappointed as they had failed to beat Junior's record of landing a 10.5 kilo Peacock Bass at this spot.

With the weather now seemingly set fair, we left our mooring and head for our afternoon destination, a small forest property Junior's family owned. Unlike most other occasions when we had to use the canoes to go ashore, on this occasion, the crew carefully reversed *Iracema* close to the shore and we were then able to walk down a short gangplank. *Iracema* really was a fantastically versatile vessel crewed by a fantastic team.

For the afternoon two options were available, a general natural history walk with Junior or a more bird-focussed exploration with Regina and Chris. Those who joined Junior heard some interesting information about the forest and their walk concluded in an area of white sand forest where the vegetation was totally different to even a few metres away, where the soils were of a more normal composition.

Unfortunately, the forest was extremely quiet for those on the bird walk and after walking along the trail, we met up with Junior in the the white sand forest. This was a fascinating area to explore with bromeliads, orchids and some quite extraordinary lichens even if the birding had been rather quiet.

By the time the sun had set, we were all back on *Iracema* and after the wildlife log had concluded, Junior invited everyone to go ashore for a farewell dinner. The crew had been extremely busy not only cleaning the area but also preparing yet more excellent food and we enjoyed a selection from the barbeque as well salads and, of course, a delicious dessert.

After all our early starts, many decided to have an early night and well before 10pm everyone was back aboard and we then began our journey towards our destination for the following morning.

### **10 September 2016**

Well before dawn *Iracema* was moored (as usual to a tree !!) near the small community of Pagodão and following the customary wake-up call over the PA system, we set off at 06:00am for our final canoe ride of the expedition.

This was where we had heard the Crested Owl earlier in the trip but on this occasion the plan was to explore the area in daylight.

With steep banks covered in terra firme forest on both sides of the channels, there was plenty of shade and it was a very pleasant experience cruising around looking for wildlife. Hearing a Grey Antbird calling from the forest canopy, we spent some time trying to lure it down but despite the bird moving between trees, it refused to show itself, so we continued onwards looking for more obliging wildlife.

Our final Channel-billed Toucan of the expedition flew by but the highlight for many was an Amazon Trogon which was perched high above us giving some great views. Whilst some of the group had seen this species previously, most had missed it, so it was great to end the expedition with everyone seeing at least one individual.

All too soon it was time to return to *Iracema* and begin our journey back to Manaus. With bills to pay and packing to do, most people were kept busy for the rest of the morning but a few managed to spend some time out on the top deck for some final wildlife watching. Our final Tucuxi dolphins of the expedition were seen, as well as a selection of other species such as White-winged Swallow, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Black Vulture, but by 11am we had arrived at the wharf where our incredible adventure had begun almost two weeks before.

At noon, we had our final meal aboard the fantastic *Iracema*. Our expedition was sadly over and after saying goodbye to our amazing crew, most of the group set off for the airport to begin our journeys home, although there was a final wildlife surprise with several Pied Tamarins spotted just before we got on the bus. It had been a fantastic trip which unquestionably had more than exceeded all our expectations.

[www.wildwings.co.uk](http://www.wildwings.co.uk)