

## Pantanal Excursions II

On May 20 we went for a hike through rugged Pantanal to a 15 meter tall tower. On our way we roused a sleeping tayra for a rare sighting of this nocturnal weasel-like mammal. We also saw several agoutis and a lineated woodpecker, a smaller version of the pileated woodpecker we have in Georgia. Agoutis and macaws are among the few animals that can open Brazil nuts without tools. Across from the tower top in a big tree was an active jabiru nest. Toco toucans were in the trees.



Tayra



Agouti



Lined woodpecker



Toco toucan

In the afternoon, we went horseback riding through the wet Pantanal, to muddy depths of three feet or so.



Lynn ready for action

The horses seemed to like wading through the swamp but you could hear and feel their hooves getting stuck in the mud beneath the water.

Our last morning excursion at Araras Ecolodge was a walk through a raised forest. We saw ticks, ants, termites and spiders. The zebu wander through these forests and drop copious amounts of dung. Growing in the dung were beautiful specimens of psilocybin mushrooms. We also saw armadillos and their mounds.



Nine-banded armadillo

In the afternoon we traveled down the dirt road towards Porto Jofre. Along the way we saw a bare-faced curassow, a red-legged seriema and a red-footed tortoise. The birds were fast runners and the tortoise was a tortoise.



Male and female curassows



Red-legged seriema



Red-footed tortoise was shoebox size

While out of phone contact with the rest of the world we did get a text message that said our home in Smyrna had been flooded by a bad supply line to an upstairs toilet. The water had been pouring out for many days and the destruction was widespread. By text we got the water shut off and the insurance company into action mitigating the disaster. We could have left the Pantanal and gone home but what could we do to help? We even had travel insurance. However, with the tremendous aid of our neighbor, Sharon Fellwock, we were able to continue our trip and even enjoy it. Lynn kept up with the mitigation by text messaging Sharon and I tried not to think about it.

During May 22 to 24 we were in Pousada Do Parque in Chapada Dos Guimares. This is in the high plateau country of the northern Pantanal. It is filled with wildlife but is more famous for its scenery that includes many waterfalls. On a hike to see waterfalls we came across leaf cutter ants taking their cuttings into a nest where they grow fungus to eat.



Leaf cutter ants

The mounds made by these ants are many feet across.



Large leaf cutter ant mound



Deep in the forest one found lovely waterfalls and refreshing pools.



Falls with pool

On the lodge property there is a private falls of great beauty.



Private falls

The lodge also had Brazilian guinea pigs, burrowing owls, humming birds, hover flies, large green-backed skinks and a large ant with four white spots on its abdomen. I tried to identify it but couldn't and think it may be a type of wingless solitary wasp. The hover flies look like yellow jackets, hover over your arms and land to drink sweat. They are harmless.



Brazilian burrowing owl with chicks



Hover fly

In the late afternoon of May 24 we flew from Cuiaba to Campo Grande in Mata Grosso do Sul. We spent the night in Novotel Campo Grande. The next morning Anderson collected us for the long drive to Caiman Ecolodge.

The road from Campo Grande to Miranda is paved and in very good condition with light traffic. From Miranda to the lodge we used a red dirt road. Along this road much wildlife could be observed. We were at Caiman Ecolodge until May 29.