

Birding in north-east Brazil, part 2: The vast state of Bahia

Ciro Albano

No birder can feel satisfied without ever visiting the country of Brazil, home to over half of the Neotropical avifauna. In this second and final part on top birding places in north-east Brazil, the author makes this point abundantly clear... What are you waiting for?



Male Hooded Visorbearer *Augastes lumachella* (Near Threatened), Morro do Pai Inácio, February 2010. Endemic to the state of Bahia and found on mountain-tops of the Chapada Diamantina

All photos are by [Ciro Albano/www.nebrazilbirding.com](http://www.nebrazilbirding.com) and were taken in north-east Brazil

Continuing with the second part of the article published in *Neotropical Birding* 6² here I describe the state of Bahia; an outstanding destination for birdwatching in Brazil. The state is huge (565 million km²) and contains an incredible diversity of habitats, ranging from lowlands to montane Atlantic Forest, Caatinga, semi-deciduous forest and several Cerrado types. A total of almost 800 species has been recorded in the state⁶, which harbours 33 Important Bird Areas (IBAs)³ and six Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs)⁷.

At least two weeks will be necessary to explore Bahia. Roads are usually good but the main highways (especially the BR-116 and BR-101) are sometimes very busy with big trucks. Access to most birding sites is easy and an ordinary car is sufficient to reach almost all the birding destinations (when a 4x4 is necessary this is stated below).

There is an international airport in the capital of Salvador de Bahia, with several car rental agencies. My suggested itinerary starts and ends in the capital. If you are contemplating an entire north-east Brazil trip you can easily rearrange the itinerary proposed in my first instalment² of this article by driving to Chapada Diamantina from Estância.

Key Birding Sites

Chapada Diamantina (12°33'S 41°25'W)

Following a five-hour drive from Salvador (use Google Maps for the route) you will arrive at one of the most impressive places in Brazil; the landscapes are astonishing. The Chapada Diamantina forms part of a long series of highlands linked to the Espinhaço range, which extends north from central Minas Gerais through Bahia, forming a watershed between the basin of the rio São Francisco and those rivers draining directly into the Atlantic. Due to the altitudinal gradient, the mountain ranges that retain the humid air from the sea and the subsequent rainshadow, there is a high diversity of habitats such as *caatinga*, *cerrado*, *campo rupestre* (arid mountain shrubs), moist forest, gallery forests and of course, a rich avifauna of over 350 species⁴. Some endemics of the region are the incredible Hooded Visorbearer *Augastes lumachella* (Near Threatened) and the recently described Sincorá Antwren *Formicivora grantsaui* and Diamantina Tapaculo *Scytalopus diamantinensis* (both published in 2007).

The region also holds typical Atlantic Forest birds such as Plain Parakeet *Brotogeris tirica*, Black Jacobin *Florisuga fusca*, Violet-capped Woodnymph *Thalurania glaucopis*, White-

shouldered Fire-eye *Pyriglena leucoptera*, White-bibbed Antbird *Myrmeciza loricata* and others. Cerrado specialities include Collared Crescentchest *Melanopareia torquata*, Rufous-sided Pygmy Tyrant *Euscarthmus rufomarginatus* (Near Threatened), the beautiful Horned Sungem *Heliactin bilophus* and White-banded Tanager *Neothraupis fasciata* (Near Threatened). *Campo rupestre* birds include Gray-backed Tachuri *Polystictus supercilialis* (Near Threatened) and Pale-throated Serra Finch *Embernagra longicauda* (Near Threatened). Finally, Caatinga birds include Cactus Parakeet *Aratinga actorum*, Broad-tipped Hermit *Anopetia gounellei*, Spotted Piculet *Picumnus pygmaeus*, Caatinga Antwren *Herpsilochmus sellowi* (Near Threatened), Silvery-cheeked Antshrike *Sakesphorus cristatus*, Scarlet-throated Tanager *Compsiothraupis loricata*, Caatinga Cacholote *Pseudoseisura cristata*, Great Xenops *Megaxenops paraguayae* and the very range-restricted São Francisco Sparrow *Arremon franciscanus* (Near Threatened), among others.

The first place to visit in Chapada Diamantina is the nice town of Lençóis. As the region is visited by many tourists, there are several hotel options. I highly recommend the Pousada Casa da Geléia (www.casadageleia.com.br, e-mail: casadageleia@hotmail.com, tel: +55 75 3334 1151). The owner José Carlos is a bird enthusiast, and they have feeders visited by 14 different species, including members of a very isolated population of the Brown Violetear *Colibri delphinae* (subspecies *greenwalti*).

The most special bird here is undoubtedly Hooded Visorbearer; it lives on the rocky mountains, known as *mesas*, of the region. The easiest and closest place is the Morro do Pai Inácio (12°27'22.00"S 41°28'24.95"W). From Lençóis drive north until reaching the BR-242 and turn left (c.11 km) at the Lençóis junction; there's a bridge with a sign 'divisa Lençóis / Palmeiras'; the Morro do Pai Inácio will come into view after a few metres (it's a very famous place, so, if in doubt don't hesitate to ask for directions). At the foot of the Morro take a dirt road to the right. Pale-throated Serra Finch is common along this road and even the visorbearer can be found. But to guarantee the hummingbird, continue to the car park and walk up to the plateau. Halfway up the path to the top there is a trail on the right to a more open area where the birds are always present. Usually there are local guides at the entrance of the Morro near the car park; if you ask them about the 'beija-flor' they will show you the place for a modest fee. Velvety Black Tyrant *Knipolegus nigerrimus*,

Maroon-bellied Parakeet *Pyrrhura frontalis* and sometimes Black-chested Buzzard Eagle *Buteo melanoleucus* can be found here as well.

Once you have ticked the visorbearer, drive on up to the *caatinga* vegetation. From the Morro do Pai Inácio, continue 18 km along the BR-242, and turn left to Palmeiras. Drive through the town (if in doubt ask for directions to the road to Guiné). After crossing the town and driving a while on a dirt road, there will be a junction (at 12°31'52.09"S 41°34'10.22"W) with a sign (left goes to Capão and right to Lavrinha and Guiné). Turn right and drive c.1 km until the first bridge, where you can park your car and walk uphill along the road. All the *Caatinga* species occur here; pay special attention for São Francisco Sparrow (it has a high-frequency voice and can be very secretive). Broad-tipped Hermit, Spotted Piculet, Silvery-cheeked Antshrike and *Caatinga Antwren* are very common. Very early in the morning a group of Scarlet-throated Tanagers is normally present but it seems to move off as the day warms up (sometimes they can also be found feeding on the jack fruits in the garden of Casa da Geléia).

After birding the *Caatinga*, where activity decreases rapidly in the morning at it gets hot, start driving back to Lençóis. After passing the Morro do Pai Inácio, cross the bridge with the sign 'divisa Lençóis/Palmeiras' again. Less than 500 m after the bridge, stop the car by the road and look for the recently described Sincorá Antwren, also endemic to the Chapada, on the rocky area on the right side. Hooded Visorbearer has been seen here too. Thereafter return to the pousada and enjoy the hummingbirds visiting the feeder, or bird the wet forest near the town; a good option is the road to Remanso. Take the road out of Lençóis, drive for c.4 km before turning right off the main road (12°32'40.24"S 41°22'23.78"W). Keep on the main road for a few kilometres until finding a suitable place to park. Bird from here onwards (12°33'12.90"S 41°21'46.35"W).

Some interesting birds here are White-shouldered Fire-eye, White-bibbed Antbird, Rusty-breasted Nunlet *Nonnula rubecula*, Rufous-capped Anthrush *Formicarius colma*, Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin *Neopelma pallescens* and White-naped Jay *Cyanocorax cyanopogon*. Two Near Threatened birds are also possible; Yellow-legged Tinamou *Crypturellus noctivagus* (subspecies *zabele*) is usually heard but difficult to see, and with luck you may see Blue-winged Macaw *Primolius maracana*, a species which is becoming increasingly rare in north-east Brazil.

After thoroughly birding the above-mentioned areas head to the town of Mucugê (147 km

from Lençóis). There are several hotels available here and I recommend Pousada Mucugê (www.pousadamucuge.com.br, tel: +55 75 3338 2210).

If you missed Sincorá Antwren at Lençóis, there is another site near Mucugê. Set the odometer to zero at the Pousada Mucugê, drive out of the town back to the BA-142 (towards Andaraí). After c.3 km you cross a bridge (rio Cumbuca) and exactly 3.34 km after the hotel (12°59'23.82"S 41°20'54.73"W), there is a dirt road to the left. After a few metres, on the right side is an abandoned stone building formerly used by the mine workers. Find a place to park and try for the antwren along the road. Continue this drive south-west on the BA-142. After a few kilometres you will reach patches of *cerrado*, locally called *gerais*. There are several secondary roads worth exploring. Try the dirt road (at 13°03'45.01"S 41°29'04.13"W) which starts 300 m after the road to Boninal (signposted). Here Rufous-sided Pygmy Tyrant, Gray-backed Tachuri, Collared Crescentchest and White-banded Tanager are very common and it's one of the best places for the amazing Horned Sungem.

After locating all the specialities keep going west on the BA-142 until you see the sign to the entrance of Ibicoara (03°26'28.19" S 41°24'02.19"W). Turn left and drive towards Ibicoara. After 6.8 km (13°26'09.63"S 41°20'18.59"W) there is a small bridge over the rio Paraguaçu. The gallery forest here is one of the best places to try for Diamantina Tapaculo.

Caetité (14°03'S 42°28'W)

Until very recently the Endangered Minas Gerais Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes roquettei* was known only from patches of dry and semi-deciduous forest within the *cerrado* from the São Francisco and Jequitinhonha valleys in north and central Minas Gerais. But the species was recently found in similar habitats in the state of Bahia⁵. In addition to the tyrannulet, several *Caatinga* and *Cerrado* specialities also occur in the region. Consequently this is an excellent place to visit for those interested in seeing all the endemics!

Leaving the 'Tapaculo bridge' in Ibicoara drive south on the BA-142 until the junction with the BR-407. Turn right (keep going south) and after 7.3 km turn west on the BR-030 (to Brumado) until you reach the town of Caetité. The best option to stay here is the Hotel Porto do Sol (www.portodosolhotel.com.br, tel: +55 77 3454 3000).

Set the odometer to zero at the hotel and take the BA-030 towards Guanambi. After 3.91 km turn left/south (14°03'48.96"S 42°32'21.84"W)



Clockwise from above:

Pink-legged Graveteiro *Acrobatornis fonsecai* (Vulnerable), Reserva Serra Bonita, October 2009. This monotypic genus was described in 1996

(Inset) Rufous-brown Solitaire *Cichlopsis l. leucogenys*, Reserva Serra Bonita, February 2010. The very rare Atlantic Forest subspecies is restricted to a few montane forests, but can be seen regularly at Boa Nova

Black-headed Berryeater *Carpornis melanocephala* (Vulnerable), Estação Veracel, February 2010. Also found at Reserva do Passarinho and Boa Nova

Red-browed Parrot *Amazona rhodocorytha* (Endangered) is restricted to the lowland Atlantic Forest of eastern Brazil. It is seen regularly at Estação Veracel

Male Buffy-fronted Seedeater *Sporophila frontalis* (Vulnerable). Now very rare in north-east Brazil due to habitat fragmentation and illegal trade, but the species is not uncommon at Reserva Serra Bonita during spring when males are territorial and very vocal in flowering bamboo stands

Buff-throated Purpletuft *Iodopleura pipra* (Near Threatened), Boa Nova, February 2010. Uncommon tiny inhabitant of the canopy, better found by its vocalisations

Rufous-sided Pygmy Tyrant *Euscarthmus rufomarginatus* (Near Threatened) is still common in the cerrado near Mucugê





Clockwise from top:

Male Scalloped Antbird *Myrmeciza r. ruficauda* (Endangered). Two subspecies inhabit north-east Brazil: *M. r. soror* is still common at Murici (Alagoas) and the nominate can be found at Michelin Forest

Male Horned Sunbeam *Heliactin bilophus*. This widespread Cerrado species is most easily seen near Mucugê

São Francisco Sparrow *Arremon franciscanus* (Near Threatened) is a secretive species of dense *caatinga*, but is regularly found at Palmeiras and Caetité

Male Sincorá Antwren *Formicivora grantsauí*, Lençóis, September 2009. Described in 2007 this notable endemic inhabits rocky outcrops (*campos rupestres*) in the Chapada Diamantina

on an unpaved road, and keep going south always on the main road (study Google Earth images of the area in advance). After 24 km you will arrive in the small village of Brejinho das Ametistas (14°15'24.15"S 42°31'22.03"W), pass through the village and 5 km to the south you will reach a semi-deciduous forest with taller trees (14°18'29.34"S 42°32'27.63"W). Park the car and bird along the road. Minas Gerais Tyrannulet is always present here in the mixed-species flocks. Several other interesting birds are also possible including Great Xenops, Gray-headed Spinetail *Cranioleuca semicinerea*, Scaled Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes squamatus* (subspecies *wagleri* considered a full species by some authors—Wagler's Woodcreeper), São Francisco Sparrow, White-browed Antpitta *Hylopezus ochroleucus* (Near Threatened), the range-restricted and Near Threatened Narrow-billed Antwren *Formicivora iheringi* and several other species. In the nearby gallery forest (14°17'22.54"S 42°31'51.26"W) Helmeted Manakin *Antilophia galeata* and Minas Gerais Tyrannulet occur. A more distant gallery forest (12°18'41.09"S 42°31'14.49"W) holds Chestnut-capped Foliage-gleaner *Hylocryptus rectirostris* (just a few recent records in the state of Bahia), all the above-mentioned species, and many more. More *cerrado* habitat can be found along the dirt roads before Brejinho das Ametistas and many of the *cerrado* specialities found in the Chapada Diamantina can also be found here.

Bom Jesus da Lapa (12°14'S 43°24'W)

While in Caetité look for another endemic and poorly known species a little further to the west (140 km). The town of Bom Jesus da Lapa is adjacent to the rio São Francisco. By the river there is an excellent chance to see the Near Threatened Plain-tailed Nighthawk *Nyctiprogne vielliardi* (sometimes called Bahian Nighthawk). Leave Caetité after lunch and take the BR-430 straight to Bom Jesus da Lapa and stay in the Hotel Pirâmide Luxor (tel: +55 77 3481 6664).

Look for Plain-tailed Nighthawks overflying the river just before sunset (13°15'42.70"S 43°25'41.47"W). Another site to try is the bridge over a tributary of the São Francisco (the rio Correntes) (13°08'56.64"S 43°32'24.55"W). Refer to Google Earth images to check exactly how to find both spots. In November 2009 the road to the second spot was in bad shape and hard to drive. Be sure to check the field marks of the bird carefully as Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis* can occur in the same spot.



Fork-tailed Tody-Tyrant *Hemitriccus furcatus* (Vulnerable); frequently associated with bamboo and vine tangles

Some other interesting birds around here are the local rio São Francisco subspecies of Rusty-backed Spinetail *Cranioleuca vulpina reiseri*, Chotoy Spinetail *Schoeniophylax phryganophilus petersi* and several Caatinga species. When you move on from Bom Jesus leave the town as early as possible for the long journey (c.500 km) to one of the best birding sites in Brazil, Boa Nova.

Boa Nova (14°21'S 40°12'W)

Boa Nova is located in south-west Bahia, and has been famous among ornithologists for two decades due to its diverse bird community, with typical elements of the montane Atlantic Forest in contact with endemic elements of the Caatinga biome. The region is home to almost 400 bird species. The Endangered Slender Antbird *Rhopornis ardesiacus* is one of the main specialities. It is confined to a small transitional area in eastern Brazil, and is found only in a dry vegetation formation known as *mata-de-cipó* which also harbours typical *caatinga* birds, and species associated with dry forest such as Narrow-billed Antwren. Thanks to the excellent conservation efforts conducted by SAVE Brazil, the magnificent Slender Antbird is now a symbol for the conservation of the *mata-de-cipó*, and there is a proposal for a national park to protect the forest remnants of this amazing place. But the antbird is not the only speciality here: less than ten minutes away from the *mata-de-cipó* there is a lush montane Atlantic Forest with excellent birding. Here species such as Striated Softtail *Thripophaga macroura* (Vulnerable), Bahia Spinetail *Synallaxis whitneyi* (Vulnerable), Bahia Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes beckeri* (Endangered), Rio de Janeiro Antbird *Cercomacra brasiliana* (Near Threatened), Fork-tailed Tody-Tyrant *Hemitriccus furcatus* (Vulnerable), Cinnamon-vented Piha *Lipaugus lanioides* (Near Threatened), Sharpbill

Oxyruncus cristatus, Ochre-rumped Antbird
Drymophila ochropyga (Near Threatened), Pin-
tailed Manakin *Ilicura militaris*, Mantled Hawk
Leucopternis polionotus (Near Threatened) and
Buff-throated Purpletuft *Iodopleura pipra* (Near
Threatened) can be encountered, and this list
keeps growing. An average full birding day in Boa
Nova is likely to produce around 150 species!

Boa Nova is a very small village and the
best accommodation is the basic Hotel Solar,
owned by Senhor Aquiles (tel: +55 77 9995
1945). He can provide an early breakfast and also
recommend a good place for lunch and dinner.

One of the best places to bird the *mata-de-
cipó* is very close to the town. Leave the village
eastwards (on the road to Dario Meira), and after
a few metres cross a bridge and look for a small
farmhouse on the left. Stop here and ask for
permission and for a key to open a gate on the left
side 100 m ahead (14°22'10.34"S 40°11'39.84"W).
My preferred option is to head west from the
village on the road to the BR-116 and after <1
km take a dirt road to the right (14°21'54.54"S
40° 13'10.07"W). After 4–5 km along the main
road are some cell phone towers. Slender
Antbird and all the Caatinga birds can be found
along the road a few metres after the towers.

To reach the wet forest, drive 8.9 km from
the bridge, and take the dirt road to the left
(at 14°24'41.81"S 40° 08'16.81"W); after c.200
m the road will cross the forest. Park near the
stream. A few metres before the stream there is
an excellent trail. The forest is privately owned
by Senhor Charme whose aim is to conserve the
remaining forest. There is another very good
place 1.5 km after the forest, but it is necessary
to walk further. Park the car (at 14°25'16.64"S
40° 07'26.20"W). A few metres before this point
there is a gate, cross it, and take the main track.
This coordinate (14°24'52.71"S 40° 06'55.96"W) is
within the forest and exactly here I've found the
rare Atlantic Forest race of Rufous-brown Solitaire
Cichlopsis l. leucogenys). After birding the forest,
look for Giant Snipe *Gallinago undulata* in the
late afternoon on the wetlands along the road.

After birding Boa Nova leave the state
of Bahia and bird another amazing area, the
Reserva do Passarinho (also known as Bandeira
or Balbina forest) in the state of Minas Gerais, to
look for one of the rarest birds in the Americas:
the Critically Endangered and enigmatic
Stresemann's Bristlefront *Merulaxis stresemanni*.
See *Neotropical Birding* 6 for details of the site⁸.
Be sure to contact Biodiversitas before your
visit to get permission and check on access to

the forest (which is only possible with a 4x4
and that if it's not raining). You will need to be
relatively fit as a lot of walking is required, but
the birding there is unbelievable! After birding
Reserva do Passarinho head to the south coast
of Bahia to another excellent birding site.

Porto Seguro–Estação Veracel (16°23'S 39°10'W)

This reserve is privately owned by the *Eucalyptus*-
harvesting company Veracel Celulose S.A.
(www.veracel.com.br/veracruz/pt/estacao.htm).
The company owns and protects more than
6,000 ha of pristine lowland Atlantic Forest.

There are several good birds to be seen
here, but undoubtedly the star attraction is the
stunning Banded Cotinga *Cotinga maculata*
(Endangered), a very rare and difficult species now
confined to just a few forests in eastern Brazil. In
February 2010 I was lucky to find them feeding
low on a fruiting plant, taking some excellent
photos, the best of which will be published in
the next issue of *Neotropical Birding*. Apart from
Banded Cotinga there are plenty of rare and
endemic species around, including the beautiful
White-winged Cotinga *Xipholena atropurpurea*
(Endangered) which is far more common than
Banded, Black-headed Berryeater *Carpornis
melanocephala* (Vulnerable), Hook-billed Hermit
Glaucis dohrnii (Endangered), Bahia Antwren
Herpsilochmus pileatus (Vulnerable), Band-tailed
Antwren *Myrmotherula urosticta* (Vulnerable),
Red-browed Parrot *Amazona rhodocorytha*
(Endangered), Blue-throated Parakeet *Pyrrhura
cruentata* (Vulnerable) and several more.

Porto Seguro is one of the most
famous coastal beaches in Bahia, thus
several hotels, excellent restaurants and
adequate tourist facilities are available.

The entrance to the Estação Veracel reserve
(16°23'45.49"S 39°10'54.83"W) is well signed
15 km along the main road (BR-367) out of
Porto Seguro. The reserve headquarters are
just 1 km after the entrance on a dirt road. This
road crosses the reserve, and it is superb for
birders. If you want to bird the trails inside the
reserve you will need to get permission, and a
compulsory guide will go with you. The guide is
not necessary if you plan birding the dirt road,
but it is better to inform the reserve manager
that you are there birding on your own.

Along the dirt road you'll cross some areas
of white sandy soil and lower vegetation (known
locally as *mussumunga*). These natural clearings
are the best places to look for the cotingas atop
the tallest trees. Recently, the enigmatic and very



Above, clockwise from top left:

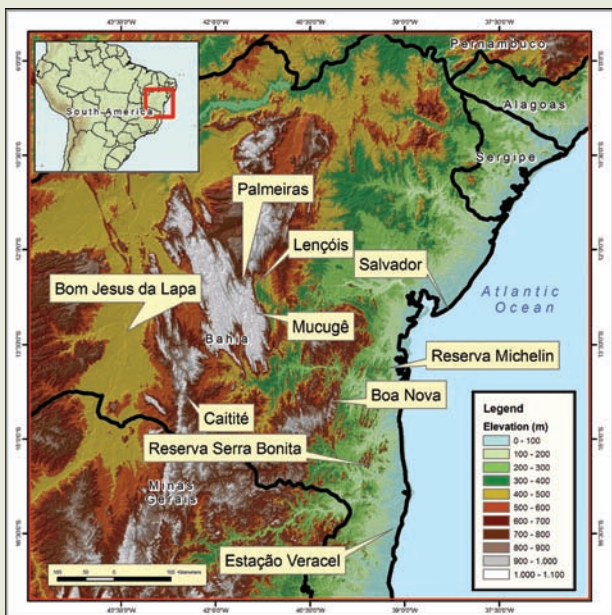
Blue-throated Parakeet *Pyrrhura cruentata* (Vulnerable), Estação Veracel, October 2009

Gray-backed Tachuri *Polystictus superciliaris* (Near Threatened) inhabits montane scrub (*campo cerrado*) and rocky outcrops in savannas and grassland (*campo rupestre*) in Chapada Diamantina

Collared Crescentchest *Melanopareia torquata*. Easily seen in the *cerrado* near Mucugê and Caetitê

Male Salvadori's Antwren *Myrmotherula minor* (Vulnerable). There are few recent records in the state of Bahia, but the species is not uncommon in the mixed flocks at Serra Bonita Reserve

Right: Map of north-east Brazil indicating localities mentioned in the text





Above, clockwise from top left:

Male Pin-tailed Manakin *Ilicura militaris*, Boa Nova, July 2009. A notable Brazilian endemic. Quite common in the montane Atlantic Forest of Boa Nova and Serra Bonita reserve

Male Eastern Striped Manakin *Machaeropterus regulus*, Reserva Michelin, March 2010. The quite different eastern subspecies of the Striped Manakin is now considered a separate species from Western Striped Manakin *Machaeropterus striolatus*

Pale-throated Serra Finch *Embernagra longicauda* (Near Threatened) is regularly seen at Morro do Pai Inácio in the Chapada Diamantina

Male Narrow-billed Antwren *Formicivora iheringi* (Near Threatened). An inhabitant of the *mata-de-cipó* of Boa Nova and at Caetitê

Left, above: Bahia Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes beckeri* (Endangered). This uncommon inhabitant of montane Atlantic Forest is usually found in mixed-species flocks at Boa Nova, Reserva do Passarinho and Serra Bonita reserve

Left, below: Minas Gerais Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes roquettei* (Endangered) is a poorly known inhabitant of dry and semi-deciduous forests. Recently reported breeding in Caetitê¹, where the bird in the photo was collecting spider web near the ground for its nest



Male Spot-billed Toucanet *Selenidera maculirostris*, Reserva Serra Bonita, October 2009



Brazilian Tanager *Ramphocelus bresilius*, Reserva Serra Bonita, October 2009, is fairly common in eastern Atlantic Forest.

rare Atlantic Forest population of White-winged Potoo *Nyctibius leucopterus* was recorded here.

Camacan–Reserva Serra Bonita (15°23'S 39°33'W)

Serra Bonita harbours one of the last good remnants of moist submontane forest in the region. This mountain range has a unique habitat, with an important altitudinal gradient of native Atlantic Forest (200–950 m). An extraordinary conservation effort is being conducted by the owners (Dr Vitor O. Becker and his wife Clemira). Both are now retired and chose the region to live and protect it. They created the reserve, built an excellent lodge and a research centre. The work isn't finished yet, and visiting the reserve is a great way to support their efforts to save this nice place. Visit their website (www.uiracu.org.br/en/serrabonita.html) for details on how to get there, bookings, pricing and for further information.

Birds are everywhere! Of course the main target is the unique Pink-legged Graveteiro *Acrobatornis fonsecai* (Vulnerable) which always nests close to the lodge. Birding the access road between the lodge and the junction to the cell tower can produce Plumbeous Antvireo *Dysithamnus plumbeus* (Vulnerable), Spot-breasted Antvireo *D. stictothorax* (Near Threatened), Salvadori's Antwren *Myrmotherula minor* (Vulnerable), Star-throated Antwren *M. gularis*, Spot-backed Antshrike *Hypoedaleus guttatus*, Crescent-chested Puffbird *Malacoptila striata* and others. Now, you have new chances to see Bahia Tyrannulet and Rufous-brown Solitaire (which is common here!).

Always keep an eye on the sky as a good assemblage of raptors inhabits the area; Black

Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus tyrannus*, Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle *S. melanoleucus*, Mantled Hawk, King Vulture *Sarcoramphus papa*...

When bamboo is seeding Buffy-fronted Seed-eater *Sporophila frontalis* (Vulnerable), Temminck's Seed-eater *Sporophila falcirostris* (Vulnerable) and Sooty Grassquit *Tiaris fuliginosus* are very common (and noisy!).

In the late afternoon visit the Research Centre and enjoy 'Serra Bonita's Caipirinha' made by Vitor, while tanagers and hummingbirds come to the feeders, including Green-headed Tanager *Tangara seledon*, Red-necked Tanager *T. cyanocephala*, Brazilian Tanager *Ramphocelus bresilius*, Azure-shouldered Tanager *Thraupis cyanopectus* (Near Threatened), Green Honeycreeper *Chlorophanes spiza*, Spot-billed Toucanet *Selenidera maculirostris*, Maroon-bellied Parakeet, Sombre Hummingbird *Aphantochoa cirrochloris*, Brazilian Ruby *Clytolaema rubricauda*, Scale-throated Hermit *Phaethornis eurynome* and Black Jacobin, just to mention a few.

If you are very unlucky and miss Pink-legged Graveteiro at Serra Bonita, you can also find it in the lowlands of the reserve. Just ask Vitor to take you to Fazenda Paris (also part of the reserve) and bird around the *cabruças* (shade cocoa). Golden-capped Parakeet *Aratinga auricapillus* (Near Threatened) and Plain Parakeet are very common, whilst Maroon-faced Parakeet *Pyrrhura leucotis* (Near Threatened) and Blue-throated Parakeet are less numerous. Near the gate of the fazenda I've found Buff-bellied Puffbird *Notharchus swainsoni*, which shows a very pale (whitish) belly in this area.

After birding the Serra Bonita region, you will be ready to head north, to the last but not least, birding site of the journey.

Ituberá-Reserva Michelin (13°48'S 39°08'W)

Here Michelin (the rubber producing company) has a huge farm (10,000 ha) mainly for rubber. The company maintains 3,000 ha of well-preserved lowland Atlantic Forest that is one of the last known sites of the Critically Endangered Bahia Tapaculo *Eleoscytalopus psychopompus*. This is the main target here, but besides the tapaculo, there are many other attractive Atlantic Forest birds. The rare subspecies *margarettae* of the Great-billed Hermit *Phaetornis malaris* is considered a full species—Margaretta's Hermit—by several authors. Other targets include Eastern Striped Manakin *Machaeropterus regulus*, Band-tailed Antwren, Least Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium minutissimum*, Scalloped Antbird *Myrmeciza ruficauda* (Endangered), Scaled Antbird *Drymophila squamata*, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser *Sclerurus mexicanus* (subspecies *bahiae*), and, as always in Bahia, more!

At the forest border look for Cinereous-breasted Spinetail *Synallaxis hypospodia*, Smoky-fronted Tody-Flycatcher *Poecilatriccus fumifrons*, and the nominate subspecies of Golden-spangled Piculet *Picumnus exilis*. Also at the borders in March 2010 I found a mixed flock of Yellow-faced Siskin *Carduelis (Sporagra) yarrellii* (Vulnerable) and Hooded Siskin *C. magellanica*. The first one is a very rare species and it was a surprise to find it this far south. There are several open-area birds in the rubber-tree plantations, such as White-bellied Tanager *Tangara brasiliensis* (recently split from Turquoise Tanager *T. mexicana*), Silver-breasted Tanager *T. cyanomelaena* (recently split from Opal-rumped Tanager *T. velia*), Chestnut-bellied Seed Finch *Sporophila angolensis* (a very rare bird in eastern Brazil), and Great-billed Seed Finch *S. maximiliani* (Near Threatened) is possibly present.

To visit Michelin contact Zildomar Souza Magalhães (e-mail: zildomar.magalhaes@br.michelin.com, tel: +55 73 8112 3351). He is involved with the environmental issues of the company and can arrange excellent accommodation at a reasonable price inside the farm. You will need a local guide (modest fee) to accompany you in the forest (the guide knows the sites for the tapaculo). Zildomar only speaks Portuguese, but if you need some help, feel free to contact me.

Conclusion

The entire north-east Brazil trip described in my two Neotropical Birding articles takes me 24 days, and I regularly find around 500 bird taxa (including debatable species). However,

I know the region and exactly where to go for birds, and independent travelers may need some additional days to cover this area.

My purpose in writing these articles is to stimulate the birdwatching activity in this amazing and poorly known region of Brazil where numerous species are severely threatened by habitat loss. More birders visiting this area can be an extra incentive to people committed to conservation. Thus, if you need any further information, just get in touch.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Thieres Pinto for preparing the maps. Guilherme Serpa shared his record of Bahian Nighthawk. Zé Carlos and Lia from Pousada Casa da Geléia, Vitor and Clemira Becker from Serra Bonita Reserve, Zildomar Magalhães from Michelin, Edson Ribeiro from SAVE Brasil provided field support. I am indebted to Ricardo Parrini, who was the first person to send information on almost all those places where I work today and which are shared here.

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CIRO ALBANO

Rua Marcelino Melo 331, Sapiranga, 60833-622, Fortaleza, CE, Brazil. E-mail: ciroalbano@yahoo.com.br



Top: Striated Softtail *Thripophaga macroura* (Vulnerable). This remarkable Atlantic Forest endemic has a heavily fragmented range, but is easily seen at Boa Nova and Reserva do Passarinho

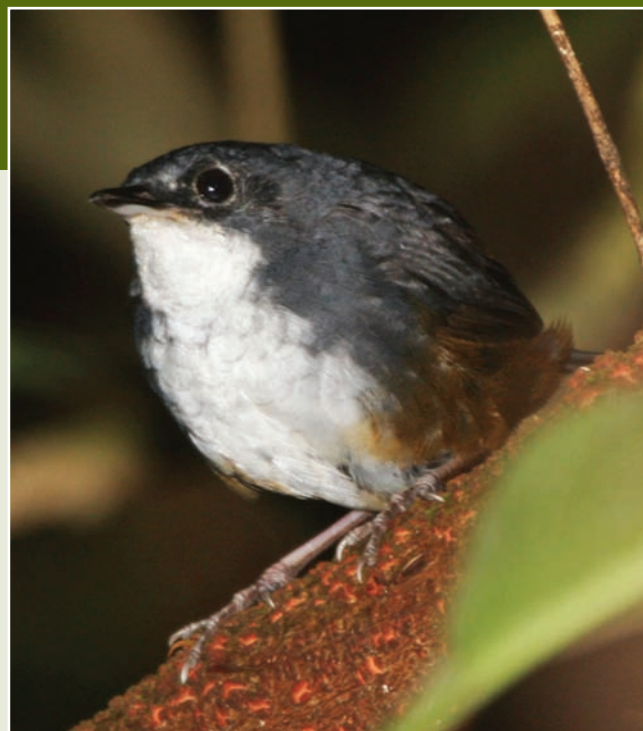
Bottom: Male Slender Antbird *Rhopornis ardesiacus* (Endangered), Boa Nova, July 2009. A locally common inhabitant of the dry forest (*mata-de-cipó*) with huge terrestrial bromeliads

Top to bottom:

Gray-headed Spinetail *Cranioleuca semicinerea* at Caetité, October 2009

Bahia Spinetail *Synallaxis whitneyi* (Vulnerable), Boa Nova, November 2008

Male White-winged Cotinga *Xipholena atropurpurea* (Endangered), Estação Veracel, February 2010. A strikingly beautiful cotinga endemic to the Brazilian Atlantic Forest



Top: Male Banded Cotinga *Cotinga maculata* (Endangered), Estação Veracel, February 2010. This rare and beautiful species is restricted to a few sites in eastern Brazil

Above: Chestnut-capped Foliage-gleaner *Hylocryptus rectirostris*, Caetité, October 2009. There are only a few records from gallery forests in Bahia

Above: Bahia Tapaculo *Eleoscytalopus psychopompus* (Critically Endangered), Michelin forest, April 2008; is another very rare and poorly known Bahian endemic