

Birdfinders

BRAZIL 2011



3 August 2011 – 13 August 2011

Participants

*From the UK Martin Bell, Ian Fryer, Phillip Hill, Michael Hogan,
Joshua Jenkins-Shaw, John Sirrett, Jack Taylor.*

From the US Carl Schweers, Bert and Heike Charest

*Guide from Serra dos Tucanos
Cirilo Rodrigues Vieira*

Our Itinerary In Brazil

- 3 August** Travelling from England
- 4 August** Serra dos Tucanos lodge, arrival
- 5 August** Theodoro Trail and Macae de Cima
- 6 August** Three-toed Jacamar Trail
- 7 August** Serra dos Tucanos lodge, free day
- 8 August** 'High and Low Elevations' of Pico de Caledonia
- 9 August** Serra dos Orgaos National Park
- 10 August** REGUA Reserva Ecological de Guapi Acu
- 11 August** Portao Azul: Macae de Cima: CEDRE Trail
- 12 August** Serra dos Tucanos, free day
- 13 August** Travelling to England

Day 1, Wednesday 3 August, Heathrow to Rio de Janeiro

Seven Brits left Heathrow Terminal 1 just after midday for a twelve-hour direct flight to Rio de Janeiro on a TAM Airways A330 Airbus.

Day 2, Thursday 4 August, Serra dos Tucanos

We were met at Rio airport by our guide Cirilo Vieira and driver Aldo Gomes. We landed in the dark but delay in meeting up with Carl, through no fault of his own, meant it became light and we had time to make some observations around the airport complex: Black Vultures and Magnificent Frigatebirds, introduced House Sparrows, Grey-breasted Martins, Picazuro Pigeon, Southern Caracara, Tropical Kingbird and Tropical Mockingbird plus our only Cooi or White-necked Heron of the trip.

We were driven from the airport to the lodge 'Serra dos Tucanos' at speed arriving some two hours later. As we sped around the coastal mudflats of Guanabara Bay en route from Rio de Janeiro a few species were called, but at the speed we were doing, views if any were brief. The lodge at Serra dos Tucanos is situated in South Eastern Brazil on the edge of the Tres Picos State Park some 400m in altitude in the Atlantic Rainforest. It has a large landscaped garden with feeders, a fast-flowing stream, restored plantation and a hillside of Atlantic Rain Forest with a network of trails. We were met at the lodge by Andy Foster who runs the lodge with his wife Christina. Andy said that Christina had just given birth, he was looking after her and we would not see much of him this week. He outlined an agenda for the group, handed out our room keys and left us to meet up with Cirilo on the veranda.

We assembled on the veranda and began recording the many species on the feeders. There were five fruit feeding stations located in front of the main veranda and two located on the forest edge at mid canopy level. Within an hour we had seen two species of parakeet: Plain (E) and Maroon-bellied ssp. *chiripepe*; and one of parrot, the high flying Scaly-headed Parrot ssp. *Melanoblepharus*; two species of toucanet, Saffron and Spot-billed, and a distant perched Channel-billed Toucan ssp. *ariel/pinto*; four species of hummingbird, the commonest being Sombre Hummingbird (E), but also Violet-capped Woodnymph, Saw-

billed Hermit (rare E), and Black Jacobin; ten species of tanager: Black-goggled, Olive-green (E), Brazilian, the similar greyish-blue Sayaca, and Azure-shouldered, Golden-chevroned (rare E), Palm, Ruby-crowned, Burnished-buff ssp. *flave/chloroptera* and the unmistakable Green-headed. Several euphonia species included Violaceous, Chestnut-bellied, Orange-bellied and Purple Throated ssp. *Serrirostris*; three species of thrush: Creamy-bellied, Pale-breasted and Rufous-bellied – Rufous-bellied Thrush is the national bird of Brazil. Also logged were Bananaquit, Blue Dacnis, Blue-naped Chlorophonia ssp. *cyanea*, Chestnut-crowned Becard, Great Kiskadee, Green Honeycreeper, (Southern) House Wren, Saffron Finch ssp. *pelzelni*, Squirrel Cuckoo, and Uniform Finch. The feeder species were a constant throughout our stay and we would become very familiar with them, and get some incredible views. In the distance on the wooded hillside Cirilo pointed out a Black-and-white Hawk-eagle on its nest. We could just about make it out through 'scopes, couldn't we? A second raptor rose above the distant horizon that appeared to have an all white tail. Mantled Hawk was called. Cirilo was non committal. We were then led to the stream at the front of the lodge. Here we saw Rufous-capped Motmot, Plain Antvireo of the nominate race *mentalis*, male and female White-shouldered Fire-eye, Yellow-olive Flycatcher ssp. *sulphurescens*, and our only Crescent-chested Puffbird (E) of the trip. It was lunchtime. We returned to the lodge and filed past the self-service tables that, along with their stews, would become evermore familiar.

We met up with Cirilo again after lunch and set off to explore the lodge's trails. Cirilo led pausing from time to time to play a tape to attract a target bird. This approach would be reasonably successful away from the lodge but appeared less so on the lodge trails where the birds seemed to have heard it all before. The first species we encountered were a pair of Star-throated Antwrens (E) repeatedly singing *tzew,tzew,tzew,tzew,tzew* and showing their diagnostic black diamond throats. Tapes for Black-cheeked Gnateater, Pin-tailed Manakin, and Ferruginous Antbird met with no response but when Chestnut-backed Antshrike was played a female, then two unmistakable male White-bearded Manakins responded. Moving along the trail we came across Squirrel Cuckoo and the diminutive Eared Pygmy-tyrant. This was followed by a fast moving White-throated Spadebill ssp. *mystaceus*, Olivaceous Woodcreeper ssp. *sylviellus*, and a female and two stunning male Blue (or Swallow-tailed) Manakins. Then, at last, the playback delivered and a Black-cheeked Gnateater (E) responded with a sharp *tsitsit*, and the male and two females showed well. We ended our walk with another Plain Antvireo and good views of the rare Eye-ringed Tody-tyrant (E).

A log was called after dinner and we went through all the species we had seen that day. Cirilo said that the ducks seen on our journey to the lodge were Brazilian Teals and that several terns seen were likely to have been South American Terns. This was our only shot at seabirds on this trip; the lodge used to include a trip to the coast in their itinerary but had abandoned them after a break-in to their minibus. Tomorrow, weather permitting, we would cover the high elevations.

Day 3, Friday 5 August, Theodoro Trail and Macae de Cima

We rose early for a 6:15 breakfast and a 7:00 o'clock departure. Not quite as early as Mike and Phil got up. They had forgotten to set their alarm clock for the 5 hour time difference and were down for their breakfast before 2:00am!

It was light around 6:30 but the birds did not start coming in for at least another 10 minutes. That still gave us an opportunity before we left to look at the birds on the feeders and surrounding forest and to add a female Surucua Trogon ssp. *aurantius* to the growing list of species.

Travelling along in the minibus we could see thick cloud masking the radio aerials on the summit of Pico de Caledonia and so Cirilo shelved the planned excursion to the high elevations in favour of a plan B, the Theodoro Trail. The Theodoro forest trail was only a 20-minute drive from the lodge along the main road to Nova Friburgo. It used to be part of the old Cachoeiras–Nova Friburgo road and railway line and in places still remains surfaced

with asphalt. It was amazing to think that this was a roadway until 1970 because the forest had taken no time to reclaim the land and only a double yellow line visible at times served as a reminder that there was ever a road there. As we walked along from the trail head we saw the first of five Golden-crowned Warblers ssp. *azarae* before a flighty Buffy-fronted Seedeater, which had been calling stridently, put in a very brief appearance. Cirilio said this favourite Brazilian cage bird was rare now and always seemed nervous in the wild! We also saw a small flock of eleven Brassy-breasted Tanagers (E). In all we saw three similar-sized flocks of this stunning tanager and amongst them the three blue tanagers: Golden-chevroned, Sayaca and Azure-shouldered, which we were already familiar with from the lodge. We had not been walking long when we located one of the most sought-after hummingbirds of the highlands: two female (Black-breasted) Plovercrests of the ssp. *loddigesii*. They were feeding on flowering shrubs. The birds showing green above, pale grey beneath and had white-tips to the tail, but were lacking the crest visible on some individuals. Mottled-cheeked Tyrannulet followed. Another instantly forgettable member of this family! You have to admire the guy who had the patience to separate them all! The Pallid Spinetail (E) that we saw next was a bit more striking. Showing the diagnostic white eyebrow, rufous cap, wings and tail of this species. Birds began to appear quickly. White-browed (or -rimmed) Warbler, which uttered creaking gate like notes, Bertoni's Antbird, a lovely contrasty bird, the first of three seen well, Rufous-capped Spinetail, rufous cap, rufous wings and tail, with black through the eye and the large, rufous tailed, brown backed, White-collared Foliage-gleaner (E) were soon added to the growing list of birds we were recording.

Cirilo paused to play tapes of Rufous-tailed (or Brazilian) Antthrush, Slaty Bristlefront, Buffy-fronted Seedeater and Greenish Schiffornis. We watched and waited but saw only the familiar Yellow-olive Flycatcher. Moving along we found a wing-lifting Sepia-capped Flycatcher and as the trail opened up Scaly-headed Parrot and Southern Lapwing were seen to fly over. Cirilo paused again to play 'Brazilian' Antthrush, Slaty Bristlefront, and Greenish Schiffornis. A 'Brazilian' Ant-thrush responded. A beautiful series of well-accentuated, rising, increasing notes. Rufous-browed Peppershrike ssp. *ochrocephala* added its melodious calls but both birds proved elusive as we weaved between the tall spiky bamboo towards the location of the song. We were on top of the antthrush but it did not show as it worked its way around us keeping to thick cover. We spent a long time watching and waiting at the end of which we were all fluent in the song of the 'Brazilian' Antthrush!

Moving on Cirilo paused and we stood while he played the songs of Oustalet's Tyrannulet (a tyrannulet – we could hardly wait), Slaty Bristlefront, and Pin-tailed Manakin. It was very quiet now. No movement, no song. Then suddenly the second of our 'tanager' flocks came along the trail, perhaps sixty birds in all. Brassy-breasted (E), Olive-green (E) and Golden-chevroned (E) caught our eye. A perched Scale-throated Hermit gave everyone some great photo opportunities. Cirilo pointed out our first Oustalet's Tyrannulet (E) and then a Star-throated Antwren (E). It was suddenly very busy as the diminutive Eared Pygmy-tyrant, two Streak-capped Antwrens, several Golden-crowned Warblers, Rufous-capped Spinetail, Plain Antvireo, and two female rare Spot-breasted Antvireos were seen in quick succession. Some had seen the unmistakable Red-necked Tanager the previous day. For me, one in the canopy was a jaw dropping moment, what a stunning bird, the brilliant red, and vibrant blue shone in the sunlight: no book could do this bird justice. Amongst the calls Cirilo picked out the distinctive calls of Black-throated Grosbeak, but where was the bird. An age passed before first one then another of these black grosbeaks with large red bills was located. As we made our way back to the minibus Cirilo pulled us up to listen to the pulse like calls of Barred Forest-falcon. It called continually but we could not locate it, and then it stopped calling. We returned to the head of the trail where we had a few moments to appreciate some of the fine butterflies feeding on flowers.

We left the Theodoro Trail and headed for the Macae de Cima road. We parked up and sat around eating our picnic lunch. Carl befriended a local Dachshund offering the nervous dog a small piece of tuna sandwich. The dog approached cautiously until two yards away when

in one quick movement the dog dived in and relieved Carl of the whole of his packed lunch. Carl laughed in good humour as the dog sped up the track away from him dragging his lunch bag. Over lunch Brown Tinamou, Brazilian Ruby and Grey-fronted Dove were all heard, whilst we saw Blue-and-white Swallow, Squirrel Cuckoo, White-throated Spadebill, Blue-billed Black-tyrant and Violet-capped Woodnymph. When lunch was over we walked along the road to Macae de Cima. One of the sought after birds in this area is the Bare-throated Bellbird. The white males utter their distinctive song from the tops of the tall trees in the valley we overlooked. They are easily picked out, so Cirilo was quick to inform us that they had clearly not returned from their winter quarters, and that instead we would be searching for another target, the rare endemic Black-and-gold Cotinga. It was quite dull and it was quiet. We saw Golden-crowned Warbler, Southern Caracara, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Great Kiskadee and Brown Tinamou called. We would hear Brown Tinamou often but never see one. Cirilo played tapes of Ochre-rumped Antbird, Such's Antthrush and Giant Antshrike. A distant Such's Antthrush (E) returned his call. Walking along we saw Lesser Woodcreeper ssp. *fuscus*, the aptly named Drab-breasted Bamboo (or Pygmy)-tyrant, three Scaly-headed Parrots and two photographable female Brazilian Rubies (E). Cirilo drew our attention to the eerie whistles of Black-and-gold Cotinga (E) that rang out throughout the valley but we could not locate the songster until we were back at the minibus when in failing light we located a male singing from a leafless tree on the hillside above.

Back at the Lodge we were called out by one of the estate workers to see a Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth in his garden. We had a good view of this peculiar mammal albeit it was too dark to photograph. Returning across the bridge to the lodge there was just enough light to allow us to see the Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper that was singing on the rocks amid the fast flowing stream.

Day 4, Saturday 6 August, Three-toed Jacamar Trail

We rose early again for a 7:00 o'clock departure. We saw no new species on the feeders but an Owl Butterfly, so called because of their huge eyespots, which resemble owls' eyes, flying outside the dining room, attracted a lot of attention.

Once aboard the minibus and out of the lodge we could see cloud masking the high elevation summit again and so it was Cirilo shelved our planned excursion in favour of the Three-toed Jacamar Trail. This is a 200km vehicular trail from the lodge via Nova Friburgo, Duas Barras, Murinelli and Sumidouro. It passes through the variety of habitats that are typical of the Southern Campos country with grassy plains, often marshy, and hills with scattered bushes and trees. We would stop regularly to look for species, but with an ultimate target of the rare endemic Three-toed Jacamar. On a good day 120 species have been seen along this trail, we would see around 85 but still felt we had had a good day.

As we passed through Nova Friburgo there was little evidence of the floods and mudslides that had occurred in January causing 820 deaths, and more than 200 people to go missing: the biggest natural disaster in the history of Brazil. We did however have to negotiate around the collapsed bridge linking Bom Jardim with Munera that had collapsed in that fateful storm. In Nova Friburgo there was evidence a plenty in the shop windows and many billboards to tell you why Friburgo is known as Brazil's 'National Capital of Lingerie'. And as one leaves the town the washing lines evidence the poorer end of the lingerie market.

Once out of town we stopped on a minor road overlooking a small reedy marsh. We were looking for Blackish Rail and no sooner had we disembarked from the minibus than Cirilo was playing a tape of the rail's call. We saw four Ruddy Ground-doves, a Wing-banded (or Band-tailed) Hornero (E) and two Yellow-headed Caracaras before the Blackish Rail responded to the tape. We had two good flight views of this dark rail with red legs and pale bill. Two rare, magnificent Blue-winged Macaws flew by, calling, and later we were lucky enough to see another four. There were several Chopi Blackbirds, Creamy-bellied Thrush and (Southern) House Wren. Two large magpie-like birds flew in, these were the aptly named Magpie Tanagers ssp. *major*. Five large nightingale-like Rufous Horneros perched

close by on the roadside fence. The list of species just grew and grew. Chalk-browed Mockingbird, Cattle Tyrant, Smooth-billed Ani, Glittering-bellied Emerald, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Blue-black Grassquit, Southern Lapwing, Great Kiskadee, several Black Vultures, Bran-Coloured Flycatcher, Masked Water-tyrant, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, the lovely Streamer-tailed Tyrant, Whistling Heron, White-eyed Parakeet, Black-and-white Hawk-eagle, Great Egret and Picazuro Pigeon.

It was only a short distance to our next stop, an area of scrub facing fields with a drainage canal. A Glittering-bellied Emerald fed on white flowers. Nearby a perched Roadside Hawk took to the air the moment it saw my camera. Two Dusky-legged Guans flew across the road and tried to hide themselves in a large tree. I saw my first Turkey Vulture and Rufous-capped Spinetail responded to tape but would not show itself in the scrub. A Half-collared Sparrow (E) eluded me but not others. We added Hangnest Tody-tyrant (E), Guira Cuckoo, Striated Heron and Scaly-headed Parrot to the day list.

We motored on, pulling up overlooking a series of hills and valleys to view the nest of a White-tailed Hawk: you could just about make out the sitting adult. While we were watching Cirilo heard the song of Red-legged Seriema described as a cross between 'the serrated bark of a young dog and the clucking of turkeys'. We sped off in pursuit.

Two stops later we were looking at two of these elegant 'Secretary Birds' walking through the tall hillside grass. The Red-legged Seriema is one of only two species in the order *Cariamiformes*, the other is the Black-legged Seriema. Cirilo said not every trip gets to see these birds. In a marsh below us a flock of feeding birds moved through. Up to thirty Chopi Blackbirds, were accompanied by five oriole-like Yellow-rumped Marshbirds and another Streamer-tailed Tyrant. On nearby wires two Cliff (or Swallow) Flycatchers ssp. *Belicosa*, perched whilst two bright-headed Campo Flickers sped up the adjacent hillside.

We drove into the small town of Duas Barras and to a small cafe for coffee or a cold drink. It was typical of those few towns we saw in Brazil, cobbled streets, few shops, pastel coloured houses tiered on surrounding hillsides.

Our next birding stop was in a marshy valley along a red dirt road where we scanned the agricultural fields and small coppices for birds. There were birds a plenty. Up to five White Woodpeckers, very distinctive, with striking white heads set against black wings. Two White-rumped Monjitas, several Smooth-billed Anis, five Yellow-browed Tyrants, three White-eyed Parakeets, three Magpie Tanagers and a 'scope view of White-bellied Seedeater. Soon followed by Chalk-browed Mockingbird, Green-barred Woodpecker ssp *melanolaimus*, five Curl-crested Jays, ten plus Saffron Finches, three Slaty-breasted Wood-rails, two Guira Cuckoos, two Burnished-buff Tanagers, two White-tailed Hawks hovering over a nearby hillside, Yellow-headed Caracara, two more Campo Flickers, a Masked Water-tyrant and a Rufous-fronted (or Common) Thornbird whose two metre long stick nest hung untidily below a roadside tree. I asked Cirilo about the national tree of Brazil, the *Caesalpinia echinata*, commonly known in Brazil as pau brasil, or Brazilwood, which gives its name to the country. Cirilo said it was highly valued in Europe where it was traded in powder form and used as a red dye in the manufacture of luxury textiles, such as velvet, but because of excessive exploitation the species was now nearly extirpated.

Our journey continued and another stop made in yet another pretty valley. Once again a large two metre stick nest drew our attention, this one built around a telegraph pole. The builder a Firewood-gatherer sat proudly on top of the nest whilst its mate watched admiringly nearby. A fairly drab bird which is the only member of the genus *Anumbius*. We also saw Brown-chested Martin, Saffron Finches, (Southern) House Wren and a party of fifteen distant Red-rumped Caciques. Several interesting butterflies were noted at this stop.

Moving on, another stop, this time by a cattle pen. Birds present included Social Flycatcher, Chestnut-capped Blackbird, Ruddy Ground-dove, Tawny-headed Swallow, Saffron Finch, Masked Water-tyrant, Cliff Flycatcher, White-crested Tyrannulet, and Josh picked up an Aplomado Falcon as it swept through the area, peregrine like, in search of small birds. Two more Red-legged Seriemas were seen walking the adjacent ridge. Southern Rough-winged

and Blue-and-white Swallows swooped around, a Yellow-headed Caracara flew through and two Wing-banded (or Band-tailed) Horneros perched for photographs on a small pylon. We drove on passing a perched Savannah Hawk, photographed from the minibus, and another Great Egret passed, we saw several during the day and I saw my second only Turkey Vulture of the trip.

We stopped for lunch: tuna sandwich washed down by a local nutty brown ale I had bought at the garage stop. Birds seen over lunch included Whistling Heron, and our second Aplomado Falcon. Driving on towards our final stop of the day a White-cheeked Puffbird perched on a fence post brought our minibus to a sharp halt.

Our final stop was for the Three-toad Jacamar (E). Worryingly the site was under construction but fortunately for us two very confiding jacamars were still present in a small stand of eucalyptus trees at the back of the construction. We had some very good views. Other birds here included Common Tody-flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Creamy-bellied Thrush, eight Blue-winged Parrotlets, Grey-headed (or Yellow-lored) Tody-flycatcher (E), 'scope views of Sapphire-spangled Emerald, a hummer with a red bill and violet throat, and a well marked Double-collared Seedeater. An 88 butterfly posed beautifully for the photographers. We returned to the lodge in failing light. Our only real miss of the day was Black-capped Donacobius, which is now in a monotypic bird family, a bird we should have seen but failed to connect with.

Day 5, Sunday 7 August, Serra dos Tucanos lodge, free day

It was Aldo, the driver's day off so we spent the whole day at the lodge. Cirilio took us a short walk along the trails in the morning, we returned for lunch and were left to our own devices in the afternoon. We logged around 60 species on the day, many of them endemics.

Species we saw around breakfast included a sneaky banana-stealing Slaty-breasted Wood-rail and a noisy Long-billed Wren (E). We also witnessed an impressive passage of swifts, some 800 birds, probably White-collared Cirilo thought. The flock would almost certainly have contained Biscutate Swift but at this range and this angle they are impossible to separate. A Southern Rough-winged and two Blue-and-white Swallows perched above the swimming pool.

We set along the trails behind Cirilo who began by playing the tape of Blue-bellied Parrot to attract a bird Andy had heard calling behind his house in recent mornings. It must have been the parrot's day off as well. A female Pin-tailed Manakin (E) uttering a swee, swee, swee-zwee call and gave reasonable views. Cirilo moved the tape onto Rufous-capped Antthrush, which brought in three Black-cheeked Gnateaters (E) including two fine red capped males, whilst a Rufous-capped Antthrush called half-heartedly three times in the distance, before falling silent. Cirilo played Scaled Antbird and a male Pin-tailed Manakin (E) came into view with a second female. An Eye-ringed Tody-tyrant (E) scolded our approach with its calls and gave brief views and two Plain Antwrens put in an appearance. A female Surucua Trogon devoured a large moth whilst the male looked on. A Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner was heard to call and Lesser Woodcreeper gave reasonable views. As Cirilo repeatedly played Scaled Antbird we listened to the calls of Spot-breasted Antwren, Crested Oropendola, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Star-throated Antwren, White-shouldered Fire-eye and White-eyed Foliage-gleaner. More calls followed Cirilio identifying Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Red-crowned Ant-tanager, Rufous-capped Motmot and Black-throated Trogon none of which put in an appearance. Only the antwren and woodcreeper gave views. We did have superb views of our final bird on this walk, a male Blue (or Swallow-tailed) Manakin. We returned to the veranda and the feeders to find a pair of Blond-crested Woodpeckers ssp *flavescens* feeding, which certainly gave us a lift on what had been a fairly difficult morning.

We took lunch and then it was each to their own. It was wonderfully warm and sunny and relaxing. Those with laptops made for the pool where the best WiFi signal was to be found,

whilst one by one the photographers sloped off to a small hide overlooking the feeders to shoot off some pretty impressive shots of birds at point blank range. Wondering around the grounds most saw Red-necked Tanager and had some great views of Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper.

As it cooled down and the birds became more active a group of us returned to the trails repeating Cirilo's tape calling. We managed Olivaceous Woodcreeper, some superb views of Black-cheeked Gnateater (E), Blue Manakin, and the tricky Yellow-olive Flycatcher. Our bonus bird was a huge woodcreeper with heavy black bill, the poorly-named White-throated Woodcreeper. In failing light we returned to the lodge and the delights of free white rum and coffee.

Day 6, Monday 8 August, 'High and Low Elevations' of Pico de Caledonia

It was third time lucky. The tops were clear. We would get into the highlands. The highlands of Pico de Caledonia north-west of Nova Friburgo are part of the Serra do Mar. A steep track leads to the transmission masts and along it you can reach the montane forest, heath and scrub habitat of these higher elevations.

On our way we made a petrol stop and from the garage saw Southern Lapwing, Blue-and-white Swallows, a Boat-billed Flycatcher, which uttered a call like a sandwich tern, Crested Oropendola and Ruby-crowned Tanager.

We next stopped along a tree lined driveway overlooking a wooded valley. It was a very pleasant spot. Cirilo hoped to see Swallow-tailed Cotinga, a species he had not seen since the previous November. Our luck was no different. We logged sixteen species, adding a distant Shear-tailed Grey-tyrant to our trip list.

It was very warm and sunny as we arrived at the upper section of the higher elevations of Serra do Mar. We were at 1600 metres with the prospect of a hard climb along the steep tarmac track that snaked its way up to 2000 metres. Our first new bird crept around the undergrowth at the start of the track. A male and female Serra do Mar (or Mouse-coloured) Tapaculo (E). With a name like that there was no doubt you were onto a range restricted endemic. The dark grey male and dark brown female scurried about wren like in the dense undergrowth and temporarily postponed the hard climb we were about to undertake. As we walked on White-browed (or -rimmed) Warbler was heard then seen and the lovely Diademed Tanager. The males two-tone blue with a smart white cap and red crest became fairly common at this elevation. Cirilo played the tape of the Rufous-tailed Antbird (E) and it was not long before we were rewarded with a good prolonged view of the antbird with that all important diagnostic rufous tail. In the scrub with the antbird a wood-thrush-sized Orange-eyed Thornbird (E) showed its bright orange eye. Two Brassy-breasted Tanagers (E) appeared next, seemingly common, but always nice to see. A small passage of birds showed to those exhaustedly holding up the rear of our convoy but frustratingly flushed the moment Cirilo came back to help with their identification. We connected with three Bay-chested Warbling-finches (E), later seeing a party of fifteen and then three. As we watched these attractive birds Cirilo played the tape of Large-tailed Antshrike followed by Grey-winged Cotinga. The cotinga is one of the most sought after endemics in this region but is seldom seen. We walked on pausing for breath, some of us gasping. Two more Shear-tailed Grey-tyrants showed well and a lovely male Plovercrest ssp. *loddigessi*, all green, blue and sporting a pair of Viking-like horns. This was soon followed by great views of Large-tailed Antshrike, black with white spotting, and a male Variable Antshrike, grey with a dark cap, dark wing panels and white tail spots. A sub-adult White-tailed Hawk flew over giving a good overhead view. Another White-browed Warbler gave crippling views. As we watched a female Brazilian Ruby flew along the track feeding on nectar from the many flowers. It was then that we heard the Grey-winged Cotinga (E) and the hunt was on.

Cirilo hauled up on the trackside and the rest of us caught up. This was a steep climb and some of us, me included, were quite knackered. We rested and ate our packed lunches, a little earlier than planned. The cotinga calling continually whilst we ate. We scanned the

hillside forest before us but to no avail. What we needed was a different angle so we continued the steep climb. We reached 2036 metres and once again hauled out on a wide grassy bank. We had fantastic views over the hills breaking to the west of us. It was like being on the roof of the world. The cotinga continued calling. After what seemed an age Josh who had been scanning through his small telescope miraculously picked it up. All clambered to look through his scope. Oh yes it was the Grey-winged Cotinga (E), dull, uninspiring, but as rare as they come. What a lift.

We relaxed and posed for group photos before climbing back down to the minibus. It was hard on the knees and some found it harder going down than it had been coming up! Carl persuaded a local truck driver to take him back down. Part way down there was a little flurry of activity. A winter flock passed, which included the rare Rufous-tailed Antbird (E), Golden-crowned Warbler, Rufous-crowned Greenlet, Sharp-billed Treehunter, and Mottled-cheeked Tyrannulet. We boarded the minibus and made a quick stop at the lower elevations again adding Velvety Black-tyrant to our list. We returned tired but happy to the lodge at 5.00 and made straight for the rum. I even found time to write some postcards.

Day 7, Tuesday 9 August, Serra dos Orgaos National Park

We rose early and saw the Channel-billed Toucan in its tree on the distant horizon. Around the feeders we found two new birds, Grey-hooded Attila (E) and a female Swallow Tanager. We left after breakfast for Serra dos Orgaos National Park pre warned by Cirilo that finding birds might be hard work!

At the garage we saw Tropical Kingbird, five Blue-and-white Swallows, a Social Flycatcher, two Ringed Kingfishers and Palm Tanager. As we continued on our journey we were shown two resident Burrowing Owls. They looked somewhat artificial perched on top of a concrete street light. A small colony of Grey-breasted Martins perched on wires at the chicane interchange we took to the National Park. Getting a telephone signal at the lodge was difficult. The cook's assistant used to earth herself to the bars of the kitchen window each day to engage in long conversations with her boyfriend. Looked most odd. In the van though we could often pick up a signal but without privacy. One of the group amused all with his phone calls to his elderly mother – "are you going out shoplifting today" he would ask.

The drive to the National Park in Teresopolis took us approximately one hour. The park provides trails at different elevations in the montane Atlantic Forest – a lower trail from the main car park at the National Park Centre and a higher trail with a boardwalk further up the road which transects the Park. We began in the car park of the lower park. In rapid succession Cirilo showed us White-eyed Foliage-gleaner, White-barred Piculet, Buff-throated Saltator, Planalto Tyrannulet ssp. *brevirostris* and Long-tailed Tyrant. Also present were Southern Caracara, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Social Flycatcher, Pale-breasted Thrush, Palm Tanager, Grey-hooded Attila (E), Squirrel Cuckoo, Olive-green Tanager (E), Yellow-lored Tody-tyrant (E), (Southern) House Wren, Black Vulture, Golden-chevroned Tanager (E), Blue Manakin, a Brown Tinamou was heard and Scaly-headed Parrot. Tapes were played for Pale-breasted Treehunter, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, and White-throated Woodcreeper without result.

We walked along a tarmac road. A large hawk circled several times over a small clearing. It had whitish underparts, a blackish cap, pinched armpits and a barred tail. Cirilo was non committal as to whether it was a Grey-bellied (Gos)Hawk. A bright Yellow-throated Woodpecker with red cap pecked away at a nearby tree trunk with an Olivaceous Woodcreeper. A small mixed flock crossed our path with several Yellow-backed Tanagers, Chestnut-crowned Becard, Flame-crested Tanager, and Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner. Beneath them in the understory Star-throated Antwren (E) and a Spot-breasted Antwren. A Saw-billed Hermit (E) perched obligingly for photographs. We had good views of Rufous-capped Motmot and a Yellow-legged Thrush, a blackbird with yellow bill and legs. A Lesser Woodcreeper shimmied up a tree trunk leading the eye to a Yellow-eared Woodpecker (E), a duller washed out version of the Yellow-throated we had seen earlier. An Eye-ringed

Tody-flycatcher (E) gave fleeting views when a small flock of Red-necked Tanagers passed through, the red on this tanager has to be seen to be believed.

We returned to the vehicle and drove for a further 20 minutes to the upper section of the park. We sat around eating our picnic lunch. Several interesting butterflies were about the open area. A nearby tree held a White-throated Woodcreeper which was tearing strips of bark out in pursuit of grubs.

We made our way along the trail on an elevated boardwalk. It was a solid structure, some parts of it were at canopy level and other parts ran through patches of bamboo. As we started along the trail Cirilo identified a prominent birdsong as that of the Hooded Berryeater but the bird was distant and we failed to connect. It was an interesting walk. Lots of information boards to read about the flora, and some interesting moths and spiders to marvel at. As we walked along Cirilo played various birdsong, White-headed Antbird, Rufous-tailed Antthrush, Ochre-rumped Antbird, Giant Antshrike, and Rufous-capped Spinetail. The antthrush and spinetail responded with calls and 'views', but it was not easy there was a lot of cover along this trail. We had some quite good views of White-shouldered Fire-eye, Bananaquit and the endemic White-collared Foliage-gleaner (E).

We were quite a long way into the trail when Cirilo heard a Sharpbill, of the monotypic family *Oxyruncidae*, not often seen. We tracked it along the boardwalk and Josh picked it out in the canopy above us. Lemony underparts flecked with black, well marked green upperparts and showing a pink gape as it sang. In his excitement Mike dropped a camera lens, which could be seen several metres below us. Fortunately an enterprising Phil found a way down to retrieve it. A Scaled Woodcreeper (E), one of the smaller, darker woodcreepers was nearly overlooked on a nearby trunk. We retraced our steps again towards the car park. On the way back we saw Blue and Pin-tailed (E) Manakins, Mottled-cheeked Tyrannulet, and White-browed Foliage-gleaner. A fast flowing stream held a Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper and the high, piped calls of Spot-winged Wood-quail were heard. We put in some time getting better views of Rufous-tailed (Brazilian) Antthrush which not only hopped along the ground but also took to a tree hole a couple of metres off the ground. We spent even longer trying to get views of a Buffy-fronted Seedeater as it sang stridently from thick cover. I was put in mind of what someone had once said to me there are views and no views, but no such thing as an untickable view!

Day 8, Wednesday 10 August, Reserva Ecologica de Guapi Acu (REGUA) and Serra dos Tucanos

We were up early, the feeders holding nothing new before we left. We journeyed to REGUA past the Burrowing Owls before arriving at the Reserve Ecologica at Guapiassu. Here has been created a patchwork of different habitats including woodland, open grasslands and an extensive series of lakes and marshes. We paused on our way in to look at a second pair of Burrowing Owls in a much more natural setting. Also here were Wattled Jacana, Roadside Hawk, six Yellow-headed Caracaras, Rufous-capped Motmot, Southern Lapwing, a Laughing Falcon, two Guira Cuckoos, and three Channel-billed Toucans.

We parked the minibus and took the woodland trail. Cirilo played the tape for White-flanked Antwren ssp. *luctuosa* and three males and a female responded giving excellent views. He followed this up with the taped song of Chestnut-backed Antshrike ssp. *vestitus* and two of these large chestnut backed antshrikes with barred underparts responded from the canopy giving occasional views. Three Red-rumped Caciques flew through. Next to respond to tape was the endemic Sooretama Slaty-antshrike (E) this small dark grey bird quivered its black and white tail as it sang. A Fuscous Flycatcher flew in, fly catching from branch to branch. A female White-bearded Manakin was observed calling but a Crested Becard gave only brief views. We heard Long-billed Wren (E), White-barred Piculet, Grey-fronted Dove and Ruby-crowned Tanager, and heard and had brief views of Moustached Wren: size of Eurasian Wren with a black and white stripy head, pale throat and rufous wings. Cirilio played Unicoloured Antwren (E) and Lemon-chested Greenlet. The antwren responded, a small short tailed brown bird with grey head and black throat calling *tzuu*,

tzuu, *tzuu* repeatedly. Boat-billed Flycatcher announced the end of our woodland walk and the boundary of open water.

The lakes before us were teeming with waterbirds, 20+ Brazilian Teals, five Masked Ducks, six Capped Herons, 26 White-faced Whistling-ducks, two Least Grebes, 120 brightly coloured Common Gallinules (now split from Common Moorhen), 10+ Purple Gallinules, 10+ Wattled Jacanas, a Snowy Egret, a genuine Muscovy Duck and two Rufescent Tiger-herons. Blackish Rail and Rufous-sided Crake called. Around the marshy edges we saw three White-headed Marsh-tyrants, a Ringed Kingfisher, a Yellow-chinned Spinetail building its nest on one of the islands, a Black-capped Becard, and had close views of a lovely male Chestnut-vented Conebill, Common Tody-flycatcher and Ruddy Ground-dove. Sun bathing along a grassy bank was a large Spectacled Cayman.

We returned to the lodge for the rest of the day and spent a wet afternoon sipping beer and watching the house feeders recording 25 species. Lucky as this was the only afternoon it rained and we were cosy in the lodge.

Day 9, Thursday 11 August, Portao Azul, Macae de Cima and CEDAE Trail

It was much cooler after yesterday's rains. We began as always looking over the feeders, taking breakfast and setting off in the minibus. Today our destination was Portao Azul approximately 1 hour from the lodge where a broad trail traverses both forest and open grassland just over 1000m in the Tres Picos State Park west of Nova Friburgo. News from England the previous evening had not been good, there had been serious rioting in major towns and cities: fortunately everyone's families were safe. When one of the group made his usual phone call to his elderly mother today he asked "Are you going out looting today?".

We parked up on the Portao Azul trail and Cirilo began playing the song of Dusky Antbird. He stopped as a Yellow Tyrannulet *ssp. flaveola* was calling, and pretty soon we were looking at two of these olive and yellow tyrannulets with their darkish wings and longish tails. A Rufous-capped Spinetail came into view, in all we saw four, whilst the zip zip calls attracted our attention to the endemic Pallid Spinetail (E). Then we found an Ochre-faced Tody-flycatcher, a pretty bird, with an amusing fart-like call. We had not moved from where we disembarked. This was getting good. A diminutive bumblebee-sized hummer, a Reddish Hermit, flitted in and out of view. Then four Magpie Tanagers, followed by Streaked Xenops, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, and a female Variable Antshrike. Then a shout from Cirilo 'get on this bird' and the extraordinary Black-billed Scythebill (E) appeared. A woodcreeper with an amazingly long, thin curved bill, wow. Then Yellow-olive Flycatchers and two Euler's Flycatchers flitting from branch to branch, followed by two Rufous-browed Peppershrikes, three Rufous-crowned Greenlets, three Scaled Woodcreepers (E), two Long-tailed Tyrants, a Green-winged Saltator, Blue-billed Black-tyrant and a Half-collared Sparrow (E). Eight White-eyed Parakeets flew over the trail, Cirilo confidently announcing you don't get Maroon-bellied here – we saw some later! Finally, a Rufous Gnateater, rufous with a grey eyestripe and crown raised, and the passage of birds was over. Phew!

We walked on along the trail stalking calling Half-collared Sparrows (E) getting more flick views. We logged Golden-crowned Warbler and another Variable Antshrike. Cirilo played Grey-capped Tyrannulet, which duly appeared. As we moved along the trail opened into fields. Over the fields and in some stream-side bushes we saw three Orange-eyed Thorntails, a Velvety Black-tyrant (E), Rufous-bellied Thrush, Grey-fronted Dove and Rufous-collared Sparrow. Then everyone's favourite Spix's (or Chicli) Spinetail with its 'John has a baby call', fantastic views of the loveliest of spinetails. We had reached a small reservoir that held a Least Grebe but was otherwise surprisingly birdless. It was always thus said Cirilo. We added three plain brown Planalto Tyrannulets to our day list. A male Black-goggled Tanager showed its lemony cap, a feature I had not noticed before. A small party of Hangnest (E) and Yellow-lored (E) Tody-tyrants flitted through the trees, and a Dusky-legged Guan gave brief close views. As we turned to walk back to the minibus we

could hear Brown Howler Monkeys in the distance. A Brown Tinamou called. We stopped to 'scope a Cliff Flycatcher when a Giant Antshrike responded to the tape Cirilo was playing. It came in and circled around us and we had a great view of this large barred antshrike with black crown. A new hummer, White-throated Hummingbird, flitted by and someone picked out a Yellow-browed Woodpecker working along a branch in the nearby canopy. We ended our walk with further views of a second Black-capped Scythebill (E), a Black-capped Becard and a female Glittering-bellied Emerald building a nest under a trailside overhang.

We left Portao Azul for the road to Macae de Cima to try our luck for Bare-faced Bellbird but they had still not returned from their winter quarters. Martin picked out a couple of distant singing Black-and-gold Cotingas (E). A Boat-billed Flycatcher perched close-by and obliged the photographers. Any disappointments we felt about the bellbird soon dissipated when a magnificent Black Hawk-eagle cruised down the hillside opposite us. An all dark eagle showing white feather edging in flight and a classic eagle bill.

We left the road to Macae de Cima and drove to the C.E.D.A.E. trail, which is only 15 minutes from our lodge. The broad trail was reached through a pair of blue gates and descended from the road through thick forest habitat to a river below. It was getting dark by now and a little damp. Cirilo played tapes for Black-capped and White-collared Foliage-gleaners, but it seemed quiet and the birds that did call, Star-Throated Antwren and White-throated Flatbill, avoided our gaze. Cirilo continued with his tape playing, Buff-bellied Puffbird, Spot-backed Antshrike, Planalto Woodcreeper. Only the common Yellow-olive Flycatcher put in an appearance. Moving along, two Scaly-headed Parrots were seen perched in the distance and an Oustalet's Tyrannulet (E) appeared high above us with a Streaked Xenops. Two Channel-billed Toucans flew over quite low over our heads, the closest yet. Then a nice passage of Black-capped Foliage-gleaners and several Red-crowned Ant-tanagers. We followed the tanagers until they were lost. A Blue Manakin called and displayed and Cirilo picked out a Planalto Woodcreeper that appeared dark backed in the failing light. A few Vaux Swift types passed over in flappy flight at tree top height. Cirilo said they were Sick's Swifts. We heard and stalked a Variegated Antpitta, it had a lovely mournful woo woo woowo song. We could admire the song but had absolutely no chance of seeing this ground hugging antpitta in the dense understory. As darkness fell we heard a Blue-bellied Parrot (E) we listened to the calls and tried unsuccessfully to tape lure it.

Day 10, Friday 12 August, Serra dos Tucanos

Our last day was to be spent around the lodge. It was a cool damp start, breath condensing in the air. The 24 species recorded before and after breakfast included just one new species, White-necked Thrush.

Cirilo took us on a walk along the lodge trails between 7.00 and 11.00 and there was a lot of tape playing and a lot of no shows. There was a lot of traffic noise to contend with today. Cirilo said they had opened up a quarry further up the mountain and were busy excavating material for building purposes for the forthcoming 2012 Football World Cup and 2016 Olympics. Along the trails we saw White-throated Spadebill, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Blue Manakin, Saw-billed Hermit (E), Black-cheeked Gnateater (E), Spot-billed Toucanet, Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Star-throated Antwren (E), Golden-crowned Warbler, Black-goggled Tanager, White-bearded Manakin, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Ruby-crowned Tanager, Yellow-Olive Flycatcher, Streaked Xenops, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Red-necked Tanager, Spot-breasted Antvireo, Olive-green Tanager (E), Plain-brown Woodcreeper, White-shouldered Fire-eye, and Black Vulture. Ian in his red polo shirt was briefly mistaken for a Brazilian Tanager!

After lunch it was each to his own. I took a quiet walk birding along the lodge trails. I saw the only snake of the trip, a fast-moving non-venomous Green Whipsnake, its emergence a sign that winter in this part of the world was coming to an end.

At the end of day we drove in darkness to Rio de Janeiro past the distant statue of Christ the Redeemer on top of Corcovado Mountain. It is now regarded by some as one of the seven wonders of the world. Despite the distance it still hung hauntingly in the night air above the city. We arrived at the airport and left Rio on a Tam Airways airbus A330 at 12.35 and arrived at Heathrow on Saturday at 16.05 in the afternoon. It had been quite a trip, relaxing, good company, great birds.

John Sirrett