

ITINERARY
Brazil's Remote Rio Tapajos
September 30 – October 11, 2017



Among the several scarce bamboo-specialist birds we hope to see on the tour is Black-and-white Tody-Tyrant, which has a highly patchy distribution through central and western Amazonia. Photograph by guide Bret Whitney.

We include here information for those interested in one of the 2017 Field Guides Brazil's Remote Rio Tapajos tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

There are six "major" river systems that are south-bank tributaries of the Amazon. From west to east, these are the Jurua; the Purus; the Madeira (the longest of all); the Tapajos; the Xingu; and the Tocantins. All of these rivers have been the focus of research at one time or another, or at one point or another – but none of them has been surveyed systematically. This is to be expected: Amazonia is a truly vast, and trackless (to "gringos"), wilderness; access to the majority of the basin is difficult, and, for a diverse set of reasons ranging from invisible invertebrates "that are just trying to make a living" through innocent but unfriendly vertebrates "that don't like surprises" to the fortitude and resilience of one's own being

("... alright, who wants to split one more *caipirinha*?) -- it is potentially dangerous. Thus, there are hundreds of square miles of forests, oxbow lakes, and river margins which, by their very remoteness, no scientists have yet trodden. But, we might ask, "What about *birders*?" Actually, it's the same story, just worse: almost zero birders.

Field Guides is aiming to change a lot of that, because nowadays, with some boots-on-the-ground know-how and "a little help from our friends", we are taking you to places no birder (except maybe Bret) has been before. One of these places is the Ecolodge da Barra, a luxurious, floating lodge anchored to an island on the remote upper Rio Tapajos where that great river is formed by the confluence of two second-order (but still enormous!) rivers, the Juruena and the Teles Pires – at the only place where the huge states of Para, Amazonas, and Mato Grosso share a border. Most of the region in the latter two states was declared Juruena National Park in 2006; the Para portion (right bank of the Tapajos) is indigenous territory, probably off-limits to us (but we'll see...). The Ecolodge was inaugurated just a few years ago to cater to sport-fishermen seeking an adventurous yet eminently comfortable, high-end experience, in the remote upper Rio Tapajos region. Having an elegant lodge in a place as far out as this is, well, amazing! Waterfalls downriver on the Tapajos close off access by larger boats; you get there by arduous, overland transport in trucks or buses followed by multi-hour, variably rough rides in aluminum fishing boats -- or (and this is the way we do it) charter flights that come into the dirt airstrip at Barra de Sao Manoel, a 110 year-old community of fifty-some families on the left bank of the Tapajos.

Based for eight days (nine nights) at the Ecolodge, we'll bird both *varzea* (seasonally flooded) and *terra firme* (never flooded) rainforests, *campinaranas* (low-stature, white-sand forests), and a variety of river islands. We'll also venture up some narrow tributaries of the main rivers where tall, undisturbed forest lines the banks, and make at least a couple of paddling trips on ancient oxbow lakes some distance in from the rivers. Among the many birds we may find are Razor-billed Curassow, Nocturnal Curassow (could we be so lucky?!), White-crested Guan, Dark-winged Trumpeter, Pavonine Quetzal, Rufous-necked Puffbird, Red-necked Aracari, Black-birdled Barbet, a long list of woodpeckers (including a rather mysterious piculet), the recently described Bald Parrot, Kawall's Parrot, Crimson-bellied Parakeet, Blackish-gray Antshrike, White-breasted Antbird, the rarely seen Pale-faced Antbird, a couple of antbirds awaiting description as species new to science, Chestnut-belted and Black-bellied gnateaters, Buff-cheeked Tody-Flycatcher (really a tody-tyrant), Cinnamon Manakin-Tyrant, Snow-capped Manakin, and White-tailed Cotinga. The enigmatic Rondonia Bushbird has not been found around the Ecolodge, but Bret has recorded it not far away, and we'll certainly be searching diligently for it, trying to become the first-ever tour group to see this fabulous bird.



Bald Parrot. Photograph by guide Bret Whitney.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: The rhythm of our days will be overall quite relaxing, with a generous amount of time to rest and get a good night's sleep (except for a couple of owling evenings that will undoubtedly represent hiccups in the rhythm). That said, we will sometimes be birding on narrow, freshly opened trails up to 5 kilometers, about 3 miles, long (one-way; mostly about half of this) to access particular habitat types, such as isolated *campinas* in from the bank of the river. To reach a couple of the interior *terra firme* trails, we will hike steeply for several hundred yards up a hillside above the community of Barra de Sao Manoel. Think of it as excellent cardiovascular exercise! Most of the trail walking will be fairly easy, but **PLEASE NOTE that walking on some of the recently opened trails will be challenging and require heightened attention and good balance, as there may be lots of short, sharp stubs, root masses, fallen trees and rotting trunks to scramble over, small streams to cross, perhaps on improvised log "bridges", etc. We will also need to use crude but sturdy**

ladders made from cut tree trunks to climb perhaps 15-20 feet from the boat on the main river to trailheads into oxbow lakes. You should be prepared to confront these kinds of obstacles and conditions on a regular basis, and for hundreds of meters of walking, on at least a couple of the days of the tour. Of course, we will never be charging along such paths, but always walking slowly, listening for birds and ant swarms, mammals, etc. Early October is near the close of the dry season in this part of Amazonia; river levels will be low, and the climate will be very warm, ranging between about 75 and 93 F, with high humidity.

If you feel that the above birding conditions are possibly too much for you -- in your own best interest and to help ensure that the rest of the group is not compromised -- please find another tour to participate on.



Landsat satellite image of our tour area, highlighting the confluence of the Juruena and Teles Pires rivers, which together form the Tapajós River, one of the main south-bank tributaries of the Amazon River. We'll be headquartered for the entire tour at the beautiful, comfortable Ecolodge da Barra, near the small community of Barra de São Manoel, marked near the center of the image. The airstrip is visible as a vertical, white line to the right of the name of the community, at 07°20'34.79" S 58°09'7.36" W. Entering these exact coordinates (two spaces between S and 58) in the "search" window on Google Earth will zoom you in there faster than you can say, "WOW, I reeeeaally want to see a Pale-faced Antbird!" Actually, you'll note that the pin will be a couple of hundred yards off (due to rounding by Google Earth). Let's hope our charter pilots get that figured out ;-)

About the Birding Areas

The Rio Tapajós is formed by the confluence of the Juruena and Teles Pires rivers, where the enormous states of Pará, Amazonas, and Mato Grosso come together. It carries mostly clean rainfall runoff from the ancient, deeply weathered rock forming the Brazilian Shield. It is, therefore, a "clearwater" river, meaning that it carries very little sediment or other particulate matter, and it is mostly blue or green, having a much lighter tannin load than that characteristic of "blackwater"

ivers, like the Negro, in front of Manaus. The majority of tributaries to the Tapajos are, however, blackwater and on the right bank (left and right are always identified as one looks downriver), the left-bank tributaries being few and short due to the proximity of uplifted, shield areas along most of that side of the river.

The Ecolodge da Barra is on a large, floating platform anchored to an island near the left bank of the Tapajos. It is sheltered from the main course of the river and is so firmly in place that one never feels any effect of being on the water. Each day will start with pre-dawn breakfast, a few minutes to return to your room and grab birding gear, and a boat ride of a few minutes duration to more than an hour to reach a couple of the most distant venues. The boats are comfortable and fast, and you will want a windbreaker type of jacket and perhaps even a warm hat and gloves for early morning transfers. Except for a couple of the longer trips, we will be in uncovered boats, so it's important to have good sun protection, and raingear and an umbrella as well. We will also do some birding on oxbow lakes that were isolated from the Tapajos or Juruena when these rivers long ago shifted course due to catastrophic fluctuations in flow levels and subsurface landform dynamics. At these places, we'll bird along level, open trails from the bank of the river into the lakes, which, in some cases, will involve climbing from our boat 15-20 feet up the above-described ladders to the trailhead. On the oxbows, we'll have smaller boats with electric trolling motors or paddled by our local guides. We will return to the Ecolodge for lunch most days (we will take a field lunch on a few days) followed by a siesta, then make another birding trip in the afternoon, a couple of times staying out to go owling before returning to the Ecolodge for dinner. Trail walking will almost always be quite dry, and rubber boot will not be necessary. If, however, you like wearing rubber boots for trail walking, or for protection during rains or around army ant swarms, then by all means bring them!



We'll want to make a special effort to see the local flavor of Spot-backed Antbird, which is the subject of a major phylogeographic study currently underway. Bret will give you the details on the tour. Photograph by guide Bret Whitney.

Itinerary for Brazil's Remote Rio Tapajos

Day 1, Sat, 30 Sep. Arrival in Manaus. As of the writing of this itinerary, flights depart Miami at 5:30 p.m. and arrive in Manaus that evening (the flight is direct, only about 5 hours, same time-zone!). For those who will need to leave home a day early in order to reach Miami in time for the flight to Manaus, we will be happy to help with overnight arrangements in Miami.

You will be met outside customs by your bus driver who will have a Field Guides sign. The drive to the hotel is less than half an hour. Once there, your guides will fill you in on the plan for tomorrow. Night at the Quality Inn, Manaus.



Pheasant Cuckoo has an amazingly broad distribution, but it is nowhere "easy", and many widely traveled birders have yet to see one of these strange birds. That said, the upper Tapajos seems to be a fairly reliable region for finding Pheasant Cuckoo, and we'll be on the listen for it. Bret photographed this one near the Ecolodge last year.

Day 2, Sun, 1 Oct. Manaus to Barra de Sao Manoel. After a leisurely breakfast at the Quality Inn, we'll transfer to the in-town airport for our charter flight to Barra de Sao Manoel. At the time of this writing, we do not know for sure what our aircraft will be, but it will very likely be a single "Grand Caravan" (10 seats, wings above windows), with the alternative being two smaller planes. If we are lucky enough to have clear skies, this approximately two-hour flight is spectacular. Have your cameras ready! Taking off from Manaus, we'll head SE to cross the Amazon River, which takes about 10 minutes! It is "worth the price of admission" to overfly this, the greatest river system on Earth, and a little later, also the muddy "whitewater" Madeira, then the blackwater Canuma/Sucunduri and the thin ribbon, far below, of the Transamazon Highway before approaching the clearwater Tapajos. The Tapajos is gorgeous, shimmering silver and radiant blue-green, studded with rapids, giant sandbars, and dramatic bends. This is wild terrain that few gringos have even seen (aside from Google Earth), let alone birded! As we approach Barra de Sao Manoel, our pilots will do a wide swing around the confluence of the three great rivers, and the community and Ecolodge, to give us a grand overview of Juruena National Park and the region we'll be birding over the next eight full days.

The airstrip is situated on a hilltop overlooking Barra de Sao Manoel. We'll load into trucks to drive down to the river, then board a speed launch for the 15-minute transfer down the Tapajos to the Ecolodge da Barra. The Ecolodge manager will give us a brief orientation session, and we'll settle into our rooms as the staff prepares lunch. Our first birding foray will be later this afternoon. Night Ecolodge da Barra.

Days 3-10, Mon to Mon, 2-9 Oct. Birding the upper Rio Tapajos region. We will have *eight full days* to bird the upper Tapajos basin, including the lower Juruena and perhaps also the Teles Pires in search of the roster of specialties listed above and some 400 other species of birds. There are numerous trails to walk through a variety of habitats, including such special microhabitats as *campinas* and bamboo thickets. We will be on the lookout for mixed-species flocks in the understory and canopy, and always alert to the presence of raiding swarms of army ants, at which some of the rarer antbirds and woodcreepers may be found; even Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo is a possibility. Harpy and Crested eagles could appear at any moment (no nest-sites have been found in the vicinity), and numerous rarely seen species of mammals might also be encountered, including Brazilian Tapir, Jaguar, Giant Otter, White-lipped Peccary, Common Woolly Monkey, and White-nosed Bearded Saki. As mentioned above, the rhythm of our days will be breakfast and departure for our birding venue early in the morning; return to the Ecolodge for lunch (most days); 1-3 hours for a rest; and reemergence for afternoon birding. Nights at Ecolodge da Barra.

Day 11, Tue, 10 Oct. Late-morning charter flight Barra de Sao Manoel to Manaus; afternoon flights Manaus to Miami. We will probably have this final morning at the Ecolodge for some nearby birding, or perhaps just to sleep in, to be as well-rested as possible for an unusually long period of travel ahead. Our plan will be to have lunch at the Ecolodge,

then transfer to the airstrip in good time to meet our charter flight back to Manaus. Dinner will be in Manaus, followed by check-in for flights to Miami, which depart around midnight.

Day 12, Wed, 11 Oct. Arrival in Miami. Flights from Manaus arrive early in Miami, allowing for convenient homeward connections. *Uma boa viagem para todos!*

About Your Guide

Bret Whitney must be at least half Brazilian by now. It all began when he was born, birding in the wild Midwest, mostly in Indiana, where he was narrowly overlooked by his high school baseball team but did, in fact, graduate from Earlham College. He is known for his ability to identify birds by their calls and songs, which has led to his stumbling onto multiple species new to science. Bret is one of the founders of Field Guides, a Research Associate of the Museum of Natural Science at Louisiana State University, an Associate of the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell, 2004 recipient of the ABA's Ludlow Griscom award, and an eternal optimist about everything except Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. Bret guides most of our Brazil tours and, with Brazilian colleagues, he is supposed to be producing a series of regional field guides to the birds of Brazil. Over the past 16 years, he has probably spent more time researching the avifauna of the upper Tapajos region than anyone else. When not on tour, "the Kite" attempts to stay in shape with irregular bike rides, by leaning over pool tables, and by hefting kegs of Live Oak Pilsner and dumping 35-lb sacks of spicy crawfish, corn, and potatoes onto old doors covered with newspapers so his family and friends can pig out at his crawfish boils. Oh yes, and by stirring cauldrons of Brazilian *moqueca* at the Field Guides annual business meeting!

*"This trip surpassed all of my wishes! It was simply an amazing experience! Seeing birds that not many have seen was really an honor. **Bret Whitney** has such knowledge of the birds and of the history of Brazil and he shares so much that it is a full experience. I just loved this trip! I feel very privileged to have been able to go." D.F., Brazil's Rio Roosevelt*

Please visit <http://fieldguides.com/guides> for a look at Bret's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$9250 from Manaus

DEPOSIT: \$950 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: June 2, 2017

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$3200 (singles at the Ecolodge cannot be guaranteed but will very likely be available)

LIMIT: 8

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: In Manaus, we will stay one night in the Quality Inn. The Ecolodge da Barra (8 nights) is nigh-on luxurious, featuring spacious (two beds), air-conditioned rooms with private bathrooms, fully stocked bar, and great meals in the comfortable, air-conditioned dining room any time we want them. The Ecolodge will also do laundry for us every day!

DOCUMENTS: A current passport is necessary for US citizens to enter Brazil. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond the dates of your visit, as regulations vary from country to country, and are subject to change. In addition, you will need a visa to enter Brazil. Our office will forward you visa application instructions. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Brazilian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

VACCINATIONS: It is quite possible (albeit unlikely) to contract malaria in the area that this tour will visit. Please consult <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentMalariaBrazil.aspx> and other sources of information, and consult with your physician about the most appropriate prophylaxis for you, should you opt to take one. Likewise, Yellow Fever is widespread in many parts of Brazil, including the Amazon basin, and we recommend all travelers to Brazil be vaccinated against the disease. Please check <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentYellowFeverBrazil.aspx> for the current CDC information and consult with your physician about whether the vaccine is appropriate for you (there are contraindications for some individuals).

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$9250 for one person in double occupancy from Manaus. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 11, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through dinner on Day 11, all ground transportation, round-trip charter flight, all transfers in Manaus, all drinks of all kinds, daily laundry service, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Manaus, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$3200 (singles at the Ecolodge cannot be guaranteed but will very likely be available). If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$950** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by June 2, 2017. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date,

50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at www.fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.htm and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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