

ITINERARY

NOWHERE BUT NORTHEAST BRAZIL

January 18-February 4, 2025

Fernando de Noronha Pre-Tour Extension

January 16-19, 2025



The Seven-colored Tanager is a gorgeous representative of the birds we'll see on this exciting tour. This bird is confined to the Atlantic coastal forests of NE Brazil, where it is considered rare. Photograph by participant Stephen Gast.

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides Nowhere but Northeast Brazil! 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

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- 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 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

"Northeast Brazil" is a really big piece of turf. Geographically, it covers all of that chunk sticking out into the Atlantic but biogeographically, and specifically in terms of bird distributions, it casts an even greater compass. Thus, from the states of Ceara and Pernambuco thence far to the south and west, where biomes range from humid Atlantic Forest through *caatinga* and *cerrado* woodland to the edges of Amazonia, there are one heckuva lot of endemic birds, some of them among the most endangered species on the continent, many of them among the most range-restricted in the world.

Would you like to see them all? You bet you would! That's why we pioneered birding tourism in Northeast Brazil

more than twenty years ago and why we're continuing to expand our (your!) horizons there. Get ready to take on White-collared Kite, Mantled Hawk, Lear's (Indigo) Macaw, Broad-tipped Hermit, Hooded Visorbearer, Long-tailed Woodnymph, Biscutate Swift, Pygmy and Least nightjars, Ochre-backed Woodpecker, Ochraceous, Tawny, Spotted, and Golden-spangled piculets (4 piculets!), and Great Xenops, Red-shouldered Spinetail, Silvery-cheeked Antshrike, Planalto Slaty-Antshrike, Caatinga and Sincora antwrens, Diamantina Tapaculo, Ash-throated Casiornis, Greater and Bahia wagtail-tyrants (the former likely to be split from more widespread, distant relatives), Gray-backed Tachuri, Rufous-sided Pygmy-Tyrant, Araripe Manakin, Seven-colored Tanager, White-banded Tanager, Scarlet-throated Tanager, Pale-throated Pampa-Finch, and White-throated Seedeater among a couple of hundred others.

Nowhere but Northeast Brazil! (18 days, not including the extension) covers the states of Pernambuco, Ceara, and north-central Bahia to end in Salvador. And now, from 2022 forward, the tour backs up to our new **Bahia Birding Bonanza** tour (15 days) so you can continue the quest for endemics of the northern Atlantic Forest biome in coastal and interior Bahia in grand fashion! And in 2022, for the first time in 15+ years, we offered a short pre-tour extension to the Fernando de Noronha islands in the Atlantic Ocean which all agreed was spectacular! So, next January-February, hang up that heavy coat, grab your bin's and pack some light clothes (don't forget your flip-flops!) and leave Old Man Winter at your doorstep to join Bret and Marcelo for a rewarding journey through the beaches and badlands of Northeast Brazil.



*Hooded Visorbearer is a spectacular hummingbird endemic to NE Brazil. We'll find it in the Chapada Diamantina.
Photograph by participant Jean Perata.*

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better-fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS:** Some trails may be quite steep in places; we may be on trails for an hour or more to get to some birding locations. The Atlantic Forest terrain is hilly.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Some roads may be rough; we'll be in 4WD vehicles on at least one day.
- **PACE:** We'll have early starts almost every day; on non-travel days, we'll try to have breaks mid-day. Some days will be long, however, with lunches in the field, and a lot of hiking. We'll have some long travel days, especially on

the final day of the tour, if the airport at Lençóis is not reopened by tour time, with the normally scheduled Sunday flight operational.

- **ELEVATION:** We will not be encountering high elevations on this tour.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will vary with elevation, ranging from the 60's F at dawn, to possible highs in the mid-90's F on sunny days. Rain is likely some days. Some areas will have high humidity.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we ask that everyone remain conscious of the seat rotation system defined by your guides. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but on occasion participants must be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. Of course, this will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

*This tour may be combined with our **BAHIA BIRDING BONANZA** tour, February 2-16, 2025.*



About the Birding Areas

Here is some information that will allow an understanding of the type of habitat and general terrain we will visit on each segment of the tour.

Atlantic Forest—For millennia, oceanic trade winds have brushed the face of the coastal forests and the uplifted Borborema Plateau in eastern Pernambuco and Alagoas. Moisture from the trades has permitted the historical maintenance of enclaves of humid forest that just a few miles to the west, in the rainshadow of the hills, give way to arid *caatinga*. In a couple of regularly birded reserves in eastern Pernambuco, we are privileged to enter this exceedingly rare habitat as we seek encounters with some of the most endangered species of birds in all of South America. We'll do considerable slow walking through these forests, in somewhat hilly terrain.

Ceara Uplands and Lowlands—The state of Ceara (capital Fortaleza) is situated in one of the most generally arid regions of the northeast. The severe dry season, which begins in about July and usually endures to December, typically has broken by the time our birding begins. We will concentrate on two upland areas of Ceara: the Serra de Baturite, a

short distance inland from the coast, and the Chapada do Araripe, in the far south. Habitat in these places is similar, mainly semi-deciduous forest; most of the trees are essentially evergreen. Birding will be along easy trails and roadsides with occasional scrambles into the woods for views of more secretive species. We will also take most of two days to traverse the state north-south, making our first major birding stop in *caatinga* and also checking out any waterholes along the way, where smaller birds concentrate, and we could also find such rarities as Masked Duck, Southern Pochard, and possibly even Comb Duck.

Caatinga—Most of the interior of Brazil's Northeast is dominated by seasonally arid woodland and scrub called *caatinga*, or "white forest," by the Tupi Indians because it is so pale and dry for much of the year. *Caatinga* is one of the least-birded but most highly distinctive biomes in South America, and it is found only in the "outback" of Northeastern Brazil. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most highly disturbed biomes on the continent, owing to its generally fragile nature (growing on generally flat ground and easily cleared and burned) and a long history of human occupation. Several different classes of *caatinga* have been defined, based on plant species composition, abundance of trees or shrubs, and other factors; virtually none of the natural *caatinga*, which was a tall, deciduous forest, exists today. We will penetrate the *caatinga* several times on our tour route. Birding in the *caatinga* is not difficult, as the ground is mostly level and easy to walk, and birds are usually easy to see well (once you find them, that is!). Bordering the eastern part of the *caatinga* biome is the Raso da Catarina, a remote range of redrock canyons formed by erosion of an ancient, sandstone plateau that are the sole breeding stronghold of the Lear's (Indigo) Macaw.



This view of the distinctive Caatinga habitat is from central Bahia. Photograph by guide Bret Whitney.

Chapada Diamantina—This fabled area is a geologically spectacular region of butte-like mountain blocks and deep valleys in the interior of the huge state of Bahia. It has obviously experienced a complex paleoclimatic history, and today its towering escarpments are flanked with semi-humid forest that harbors a unique mixture of birds from southeastern Brazil and northeastern dry forest, while outliers of *cerrado* more typical of the Brazilian Plateau far to the southwest cap the upper slopes and summits. Only a few of these remote summits have been explored biologically; one of them holds an amazing fifty-plus species of strange, endemic plants. But a short distance from the base of the Chapada Diamantina, *caatinga* once again dominates the landscape. You will find your second wind in the little towns of Mucuge and Lençóis and the chic and charming pousadas we'll call home for three nights. This beautiful region—and its wonderful birds, especially the Hooded Vireo and Sincora Antwren—is not to be missed. Most tour participants find it a surprising revelation that such a place exists in Brazil!



The Noronha Vireo is one of two endemics we'll see on Fernando de Noronha. Photograph by participant Whitney Mortimer.

Itinerary for the Fernando de Noronha pre-tour extension

As a pre-tour extension to our *NOWHERE BUT NORTHEAST BRAZIL!* tour, we're offering a unique opportunity to bird the Fernando de Noronha islands. This tiny archipelago of six main islets is situated about 350 km off the coast of Rio Grande do Norte, in the tropical Atlantic Ocean. The archipelago is of relatively recent, volcanic origin. The interior, behind sparkling, white-sand beaches with scattered palms, is marked with low hills and jagged outcrops resulting from lava flows and is covered with low brush and cacti. The islands support a rich nesting population of tropical seabirds including boobies, frigatebirds, tropicbirds, and a variety of terns including the distinctive nominate subspecies of the White Tern. Land birds are few, but there are two species endemic to Fernando de Noronha: Noronha Elaenia (*Elaenia ridleyana*, most closely related to Large Elaenia), and Noronha Vireo (*Vireo gracilirostris*, probably most closely related to Black-whiskered Vireo), and we note that the endemic subspecies of Eared Dove here (*Zenaida auriculata noronha*) is highly distinctive, and definitely worth a close view. Fernando de Noronha also boasts the most extensive system of coral reefs (some truly spectacular) off the eastern coast of South America. Along with the birding we'll enjoy the spectacular scenery and soak up some of that wonderful tropical island warmth. We'll have two nights on Fernando de Noronha, then fly back to Recife.

Days 1-2, Thu-Fri, 16-17 Jan. Departure from home and arrival into Recife. Flights depart from your home on Thursday and arrive in Recife Friday morning, after connecting through and clearing Customs in Sao Paulo or Brasilia. We'll take a midday flight of about 90 minutes to the Fernando de Noronha islands in the tropical Atlantic Ocean. If we have not seen the specialties by the time we make it to our hotel for check-in, birding this afternoon may well produce great views of the Noronha Elaenia, Noronha Vireo, and the *noronha* subspecies of Eared Dove. We'll also be able to get to bed early this evening, to catch up on sleep after long international flights.

Day 3, Sat, 18 Jan. Isla Fernando de Noronha. We'll efficiently locate the Noronha Elaenia and Noronha Vireo this morning (if we didn't see them hopping around at baggage claim yesterday), so we should have the balance of the day to look for the breeding seabirds. This remote island archipelago is a thriving breeding grounds for thousands of seabirds. From boardwalks that allow close viewing above the steep, rocky shores of several islets, we will watch for Red-billed and White-tailed tropicbirds; Masked, Red-footed, and Brown boobies; Magnificent Frigatebird; and lots of Sooty Terns, both noddies, and the gorgeous little White Tern. The scenery alone is worth the trip out here!

To get yourself psyched up for an exciting visit to Fernando de Noronha, be sure to take a look at the videos presented in the 2022 tour triplist. If we are super-lucky we could cross paths with Spinner Dolphins, here at one of their two consistent concentration points on Earth. These seldom-seen animals move in huge numbers, individuals constantly breaching and spinning spectacularly in the air.



The lovely White Tern nests on Fernando de Noronha. Photograph by participant Linda Rudolph.

Day 4, Sun, 19 Jan. Fernando de Noronha to Recife. After a final morning on the archipelago, we'll depart the islands for Recife. This afternoon we'll head out for our first taste of birding on the Continent en route to the small town of Palmares, about 3 hours south of Recife. Night in Palmares.

Itinerary for Nowhere but Northeast Brazil

Please Note! *Because flight schedules in Brazil often change several times in a year, it is not possible to guarantee that we'll be able to operate this tour in precisely the order we describe in the day-by-day itinerary, below. We will, however, monitor the situation and make arrangements for the best possible outcome.*

Days 1-2, Sat-Sun, 18-19 Jan. Recife, Pernambuco; drive to Palmares. Flights depart from your home on Saturday and arrive in Recife Sunday morning, after connecting through and clearing Customs in Sao Paulo, Rio, or Brasilia. **If you are already in Brazil, please arrive in Recife, at the airport, no later than 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, 19 January. If you opt to arrive a day or two ahead of the tour start date and Field Guides books your accommodation, we'll arrange to pick you up at a predetermined hour for the trip to the airport.**

Once we have everybody together, we'll depart the airport for the roughly three-hour transfer to our hotel in the town of Palmares. Weather permitting, we will make our first birding stop along a road en route to the hotel. Thus, you should be dressed appropriately, meaning comfortable walking shoes and lightweight clothing, binoculars and sunscreen at hand (no bugs to worry about, no muddy trails, no scope needed but possibly desirable). We'll probably do a birding walk of less than ¼ mile on easy footing—it's a delightful introduction to racking up the lifers!

Our hotel in Palmares puts us in position for very important birding at the Frei Caneca Reserve, about an hour away via dirt roads winding through vast plantations of sugarcane. Night of Day 2 in Palmares.

Day 3, Mon, 20 Jan. Frei Caneca & Pedra D'Anta Reserves. Our full day at Frei Caneca and the nearby Pedra D'Anta reserves will see us up quite early for a critically important day afield as we search for some of the rarest birds in South

America. Access to the reserves is by steep, narrow, dirt roads that are nearly impassable if wet, even in our 4WD vehicles, so keep your fingers crossed for sunny weather (this is a generally dry time of year, but the weather on this planet is not what it used to be). Here is but a partial list of birds we aim to encounter today (a few of which we will also have a chance for tomorrow): White-collared Kite (ultra-rare), Red-shouldered Macaw, Plain Parakeet, Golden-spangled Piculet (endemic subspecies *pernambucensis*), Orange-bellied Antwren, Willis's Antbird (endemic subspecies *sabinoi*), Alagoas Tyrannulet, Pinto's Spinetail, East Amazonian Fire-eye (*Pyriglena leucoconota pernambucensis*), Scalloped Antbird, Black-cheeked Gnatcatcher (endemic subspecies *nigrifrons*), and Smoky-fronted Tody-Flycatcher. The Pedra D'Anta Reserve features an excellent array of hummingbird feeders where we should enjoy wonderful views of Long-tailed Woodnymph (this is the best place anywhere to see this great bird), Black Jacobin, Blue-chinned Sapphire, Black-eared Fairy, Planalto and Rufous-breasted hermits, Swallow-tailed Hummingbirds, sometimes Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, and we might be lucky enough to catch a visit from spectacular (and endangered) Seven-colored Tanagers.

Late this afternoon, we'll drive east to the coast to our fantastic hotel on the beach. It's a long but bird-rich day, *Whew!* Night in Tamandare.

Day 4, Tue, 21 Jan. Tamandare area. A productive morning of birding near Tamandare could produce, among many other birds, Mantled Hawk, Jandaya Parakeet, Golden-tailed Parrotlet (often just high fly-overs, but we have a habit of getting lucky), White-shouldered Antshrike (endemic subspecies *distans*), Pinto's Spinetail, the obscure Forbes's Blackbird (which has a small population in this region), Seven-colored Tanager, and Yellow-faced Siskin. White-collared Kite is also possible here, and scan carefully for White-winged Cotingas perched on tall treetops early in the morning. Night in Tamandare.



Pinto's Spinetail is known from only a handful of localities in northeast Brazil. Photograph by guide Marcelo Padua.

Day 5, Wed, 22 Jan. Tamandare to Recife; flight to Fortaleza and drive to Serra de Baturite. Following another early morning of birding, we'll hightail it back to Recife to catch a flight north to Fortaleza, capital city of Ceara state. Our destination this afternoon is the Serra de Baturite, a mountain-like island of forest on the edge of the vast *caatinga*. The drive is about three hours, so with a couple of birding/rest stops we'll make it to our hotel for dinner. The hotel is right in the midst of excellent birding habitat. Night in the Serra de Baturite.

Day 6, Thu, 23 Jan. Birding the Serra de Baturite. After a rousing breakfast, we'll walk out the door and start seeing birds! Weather will probably be cool and just slightly misty, but better take along an umbrella, at least, in case precipitation gets a bit heavier as we walk up the cobblestone driveway through beautiful forest. The Serra de Baturite is

an isolated range of hills that grabs the moisture-laden trade-winds wafting in off the Atlantic. It is covered with a semi-humid, mostly evergreen woodland that supports a mix of endemic and widespread species of birds. Among these are some that are currently considered to be subspecies (named below) but which, by merit of their widely disjunct distributions (endemic to Northeast Brazil), distinctive plumages, and poorly known habits, are candidates for elevation to full-species status in the future. Foremost among the rarities is the Buff-breasted Tody-Tyrant, known only from a few scattered hilltops in northeastern Brazil. Other interesting birds we hope to find today include Spot-winged Wood-Quail, Gray-breasted Parakeet (officially known only from these hills!), Planalto Hermit, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird, Gould's Toucanet (endemic subspecies *baturitensis*), Ochre-backed Woodpecker, Ochraceous Piculet, Little Woodpecker, Wing-banded and Pale-legged horneros, the elegant Gray-headed Spinetail, Ochre-cheeked Spinetail, Rufous-breasted Leaftosser, Variable Antshrike, White-fringed Antwren, Ceara Gnateater (recently elevated to species status, from Rufous), Planalto Tyrannulet, Cliff (Swallow) Flycatcher (*Hirundinea ferruginea bellicosa*), Band-tailed Manakin, the beautiful Red-necked Tanager, and Purple-throated Euphonia. Night in the Serra de Baturite.

Day 7, Fri, 24 Jan. Baturite to Quixada. We'll have this morning to go for any species that may have eluded us yesterday, then pack up for the 90-minute drive south to the little town of Quixada. We'll have left those evergreen forests behind to find ourselves in an other-worldly landscape dominated by ancient igneous plugs towering above semideciduous forests, at the gateway to the *caatinga*. Here in the rainshadow of the mountains, the region is very much drier, and if recent rains have not been frequent or extensive, the landscape may even be leafless. After lunch and a little time to digest, we'll make our first foray into the *caatinga* proper, with lots of new birds on the docket. Night near Quixada.



The Pygmy Nightjar has a wide distribution in Northeast Brazil, but as this image shows, it can be difficult to see!
Photograph by participant Brian Stech.

Day 8, Sat, 25 Jan. Quixada. Our lodging is nestled into a range of those ancient hills with good dry forest all around, making for short walks into excellent birding habitat. Here is our only chance for the rarely seen White-browed Guan—but that chance is a good one, because here they regularly feed the birds, which congregate at the forest edge early in the morning, especially in dryer years. Also to be sought in the vicinity are Pygmy Nightjar, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Green-barred Woodpecker, the handsome Silvery-cheeked Antshrike, Barred (Caatinga) Antshrike (distinctive, red-eyed subspecies *capistratus*), Great Antshrike (distinctive, white-barred subspecies *stagurus*), Black-bellied Antwren, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Ash-throated Casiornis, the striking White-naped Jay, the differently striking Campo Troupial, the impressive Long-billed Wren, and Ultramarine Grosbeak. Keep an eye to the skies as well, for Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle and Zone-tailed Hawk. This is also an internationally famous spot among hanggliders, who have launched flights from nearby, constantly windy summits to log the longest continuous glides in South America!

After lunch, we'll continue south through interior Ceara, destination: Crato and the Chapada do Araripe National Forest. We will be traversing one of the most impoverished regions of Brazil, where life is hard for people and wildlife alike. Most areas are overrun with goats (the only animals that can survive without extraordinary care) that eat almost everything from the roots up, and water is scarce and ephemeral. If seasonal rains have been sufficient to establish ponds along the road where passerines concentrate, and we may pick up a nice variety of ducks, perhaps including Southern Pochard and Masked and Comb ducks.

We'll roll into Crato late this afternoon. Our little hotel is set on a hillside with a grand view to the Chapada do Araripe plateau. Night in Crato.



Another spectacular and range-limited endemic is the Araripe Manakin. We've had wonderful views of this distinctive bird on previous tours. Photograph by participant David Sedgely.

Day 9, Sun, 26 Jan. Birding the Chapada do Araripe. These are sure to be days spiked with anticipation as we seek some of the most distinctive, yet least-known, of northeastern Brazil's endemic birds. First on the list is the recently described Araripe Manakin, a close relative of the Helmeted Manakin. Recognizing it is not really a problem, because the adult males, at least, are certainly among the most distinctively plumaged of all the manakins. It's about six inches long, and is mostly snow-white, with black wings and tail and a startlingly scarlet crest, nape, and mantle! (You can view nice videos from recent tours on the Field Guides "past triplists" tab for the Northeast Brazil tour.) We'll also begin the search in earnest for the Great Xenops. *Megaxenops* is indeed an unforgettable bird, with its bright rufous plumage, bizarre, pinkish bill, interesting behavior, and arresting vocalizations. In the same woodland of the chapada we will also look for Tawny Piculet, Caatinga Antwren (*Radinopsyche sellowi*, described new to science by Bret and Brazilian colleagues in October 2000), the local and endemic White-browed Antpitta (*Hylopezus ochroleucus*, from which the Speckle-breasted Antpitta [*H. nattereri*] was split), Gray-headed Elaenia, Green-backed Becard, Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, Moustached Wren, Rufous-bellied and Pale-breasted thrushes, Gray-eyed Greenlet (*Hylophilus amaurocephalus*, recently split from Rufous-crowned; the ones here have dark eyes), and Flavescent Warbler. We'll probably have a picnic dinner this evening, which will give us a chance for Rufous and Scissor-tailed nightjars, Common Potoo – and with great luck – Buff-fronted Owl. Night in Crato.

Day 10, Mon, 27 Jan. Crato to Petrolina, Pernambuco. Following an early morning's birding at Chapada do Araripe, we'll settle in for the drive to Petrolina, on the Rio Sao Francisco in southwest Pernambuco. We will make a few stops along the way, at one of which we have an excellent chance of seeing the Red-shouldered Spinetail. This enigmatic bird,

sole member of the genus *Gyalophylax* (recently subsumed in catch-all *Synallaxis*) is known to the scientific world mainly from a few old specimens. We've learned the spinetail's haunt and habit, however, so we are unlikely to be "sans spinetail" for long. The unusual White-naped Xenopsaris has also proven to be regular in the area, and we've had good luck finding Ash-throated Casiornis here as well. As twilight settles, Least Nighthawks take to the skies and the chirps of the tiny Pygmy Nightjar issue forth from rocky *caatinga* scrub. We'll make a special effort to see these small nightjars well; they are both really beautiful birds. Night in Petrolina.



Lear's Macaw (known as Indigo Macaw on our checklist) is an endangered species found in a small area near Canudos. We'll be able to visit these fantastic birds at the cliffs where they nest and roost. Photograph by participant Wayne Whitmore.

Day 11, Tue, 28 Jan. Petrolina area. Petrolina is situated on the north bank of the great Rio Sao Francisco, one of the major geographic features of northeastern Brazil. This is the heart of the driest, scrubbiest *caatinga*. This fragile habitat, so easily cleared, burned and overgrazed, was one of the most distinctive biomes in South America; today, almost none remains in a natural state. Remnant patches of *caatinga* near Petrolina will, however, be our main destination as we look for Cactus Parakeet, Spot-backed Puffbird, Spotted Piculet, Caatinga Cachalote, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Black-bellied Antwren, Stripe-backed Antbird, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant, Campo Suiriri, both Greater and Bahia wagtail-tyrants, Long-billed Wren, Tropical Gnatcatcher, White-throated Seedeater, and Red-cowled Cardinal among others. Some of these might have been seen at earlier *caatinga* stops as well. Night in Petrolina.

Day 12, Wed, 29 Jan. Petrolina to Canudos, Bahia: Lear's Macaws! Ready for another interesting day? Good! We'll start birding a mix of marsh and open country near Joazeiro, Bahia, where we will hope to do as well as we did in previous years, picking up Stripe-backed Bittern and Rufous-sided Crake, and a good variety of other birds on a fine early morning. We'll then settle in for 3-4 hours of travel, making our way ever eastward toward the Raso da Catarina. Very fortunately for us, this section of lightly traveled highway has been completely paved and it goes like a breeze!

The remote, red-rock escarpment of the Raso harbors the only breeding population of the Lear's (Indigo) Macaw. This magnificent blue macaw is one of the rarest birds in the world, and its continued existence is highly endangered. Recent censusing by Brazilian ornithologists has revealed that fewer than 1800 pairs remain in the wild, and that, in dry years (a common condition), they may not reproduce sufficiently to safely maintain even this number. Furthermore, the macaw's special habitat is very limited in extent and is lightly protected. *If you would like to read Bret's entertaining story of the quest for the Lear's Macaw on the 1996 Field Guides tour, go to our website to view his post ["NE Brazil: Last Chance Pickup"](#)—the story is presented in two parts and is dated March 18th, 2009.*

Now for some GREAT news! Starting in 2016, we've been privileged to have access to the remote canyons where Lear's Macaws raise their young on high, inaccessible ledges. The birds will probably be preparing to nest by late January (wow!). 2022 was a banner year for the macaws, as it was unusually wet for longer than normal, during the breeding period. We'll have this afternoon to bird near Canudos, hoping especially for Stripe-breasted Starthroat, and, if we've missed it then up to now, Silvery-cheeked Antshrike and Red-shouldered Spinetail. This night in the historic town of Canudos will put us in position for a visit to the Raso tomorrow. The little hotel here is simple and clean and serves us well for this very important venue. Night in Canudos.

Day 13, Thu, 30 Jan. The Raso de Catarina; Canudos to Catu. After a super-early breakfast, we'll fit ourselves into 4WD vehicles for the only slightly jarring journey into the Raso de Catarina. Anticipation will be running max-high as we approach the red-rock cliffs that are the last stronghold of the Lear's Macaw. With luck, we'll arrive a bit before the birds are beginning to become active for the day, their unique voices echoing through the canyons as they stretch their wings in preparation for the long, daily flight to feeding areas. Being here is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to commune with Lear's Macaws right in their living room, one very few naturalists have experienced. We'll probably see Blue-crowned Parakeets, Turquoise-fronted Parrots, and perhaps Bat Falcon here as well.

After lunch back in Canudos (breakfast was a long time ago!), we'll pack up and continue east, settling in for a long afternoon of driving, but also making an important birding stop or two in hopes of Pectoral Antwren and perhaps Golden-capped Parakeets. Keep an eye open for Red-legged Seriema stalking the surrounding grasslands and White Monjitas on the fences. We're ardently praying that the paving of this section of the highway has been completed, but if it has not, expect significantly slower going as we make our way to the town of Catu, where we'll be close to good habitat for the rare Fringe-backed Fire-eye. Night in Catu.



The Fringe-backed Fire-eye is another endemic with a very small range. Photograph by guide Bret Whitney.

Day 14, Fri, 31 Jan. The Fringe-backed Fire-eye; westward to Chapada Diamantina. We'll hit the trail early for the endangered Fringe-backed Fire-eye and good views of some other birds while we're at it, such as Sooretama Slaty-Antshrike and Band-tailed Antwren (both relatively easy on the *Bahia Birding Bonanza* tour), Eared Pygmy-Tyrant, and Black-throated Grosbeak. Our first glimpse of the Chapada Diamantina, a geologically spectacular region of butte-like escarpments and deep valleys, comes late this afternoon in the form of a distant blue wall on the westward horizon. Our destination is the small, colonial town of Mucugê. A few kilometers before arriving, we'll make an important stop and try for one of the most special birds in the area, the Diamantina Tapaculo. Night in Mucugê.

Day 15, Sat, 1 Feb. Chapada Diamantina: Mucugê. The fire-adapted savanna scrublands typical of the Brazilian planalto, called *cerrados*, support a community of birds that, in the Chapada region, are near the eastern edges of their ranges. These include White-eared Puffbird, Horned Sungem (if we're real lucky!), Collared Crescentchest, Gray-backed Tachuri, Rufous-sided Pygmy-Tyrant, White-banded Tanager, Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch, and Stripe-tailed Yellow-Finch. We'll likely also have a natural-classroom "Elaenia identification workshop," often being able to compare multiple individuals of Yellow-bellied, Highland, Lesser, and Plain-crested (and sometimes also Large) in a single morning! The Mucugê area is fabulous birding, and we'll have a chance to see several "*mata-de-cipo*" (vine forest) specialties, such as Great Xenops (if we missed it earlier, heaven forbid), Narrow-billed Antwren, and White-browed Antpitta. And rarities like Hooded Visorbearer and other hummers, Sincora Antwren, and Diamantina Tapaculo can be picked up here if not found yesterday. Night in Mucugê.



The Great Xenops is found in the caatinga where it uses its odd bill to pry off pieces of bark to search for insects.
Photograph by guide Marcelo Padua.

Day 16, Sun, 2 Feb. Chapada Diamantina: Lençóis. We'll devote this day to birding a variety of habitats in the Chapada Diamantina. This is the seldom-birded home of the rare and beautiful Hooded Visorbearer. It occurs only in this small area of interior Bahia. Even more restricted in range is the Sincora Antwren, described to science only in May, 2007 although we've been showing it to tour groups pretty much continuously since Bret first recognized it as a species undescribed to science in 1994. It is a close relative of widespread Rusty-backed and Black-bellied antwrens.

This region of Bahia is also excellent for the enigmatic Broad-tipped Hermit, White-vented Violetear, Brown Violetear (endemic subspecies *greenewalti*), and the brilliant Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, adult males of which have to be seen to be believed. The abundance of hummers in this region fluctuates considerably with the abundance of flowers. Scarlet-throated Tanager, often scarce, is perhaps most likely here as well.

After lunch, we'll swing back west and north to skirt the western flank of the Chapada, traversing several impressive rivers and streams on beautiful stone bridges. We'll then continue our westward way to the plateau region around the nice town of Lençóis, rolling in around dusk, just right and ready for happy hour at our fantastic hotel where the Caipirinhas will be waiting for us.

Lençóis dates from the late 1800s, when thousands of miners, lured by an abundance of diamonds, settled this remote area. There are still diamonds to be found today, but mining this area has been outlawed and Lençóis' attraction has shifted to one of a relaxed little tourist town, with narrow, cobblestone streets and lots of quaint shops and restaurants at the edge of Chapada Diamantina National Park. Our *pousada* here is an especially charming and relaxing place, with a great restaurant—you're going to love it! We're now in position for three days of stellar birding. Another specialty of these "serras" (isolated grassy and rocky hills) is the Pale-throated Pampa-Finch. As we search for these birds, scan the rocky

ledges above the valleys for the strange Rock Cavy (*Kerodon rupestris*, the only member of its genus), a guinea-pig-like rodent the size of a marmot, endemic to Serra do Sincora of Bahia and northern Minas Gerais. Night Lençóis.

Day 17, Mon, 3 Feb. Palmeiras, **Lençóis to Salvador and home.** After a final morning around the small town of Palmeiras, looking for very special birds like Broad-tipped Hermit, Sao Francisco Sparrow and maybe more looks at Great Xenops and some other Caatinga specialties. After that and lunch, we'll transfer to the Lençóis airport for our direct flight to Salvador, zooming over that long stretch of highway we traversed a few days ago on the way out here. [NOTE: At the time of this writing, June 2024, the flight from Lençóis to Salvador still has not been scheduled. We will stay on top of this to confirm our seats. If the flight is not reinstated, we will have to make the roughly 6-hour drive back to Salvador.]

Those not continuing for the BAHIA BIRDING BONANZA tour can depart Salvador this evening after about 9:00 p.m., arriving early on February 4 into the US for homeward connections. Those joining the BAHIA BIRDING BONANZA, and anyone who has come in to Salvador to join that tour, will enjoy a delicious dinner this evening in beautiful old Salvador. Alternatively -- for those folks not taking the BAHIA BIRDING BONANZA -- you are invited to come to dinner with us this evening (no charge). If you would like to take advantage of this offer, we will book you a room for the extra night in Salvador (or you could book your own), and you will depart for home anytime February 4.

Day 18, Tue, 4 Feb. Arrival in Miami. Flights arrive in Miami this morning, connecting to homebound flights. *Uma boa viagem para todos!*

About Your Guides

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 and 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. 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 Pilz 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.

"Bret Whitney is a superb guide who knows the birds at a level I have not experienced in any other tour. His scientific expertise was a huge plus for serious birders." P.P., Brazil's Rio Roosevelt.

Micah Riegner grew up exploring the Central Arizona Highlands and was fortunate to have parents who took him along on college field courses ranging from the coast of Mexico to the mountains of Costa Rica, where encounters with tinamous, barbets, and jacamars launched him into the birding world at a young age. During his time at Prescott College, he made annual pilgrimages to Amazonia, where he worked as a guide and participated in expeditions, mostly in Brazil. For his master's he studied the foraging ecology of Amazonian woodcreepers. When he's not in the field, he tries to make time to paint birds and other creatures that spark his interest.

Micah guided tours with Bret Whitney, John Coons, Dan Lane, and Tom Johnson before joining Field Guides full time in 2019. Micah is a generous guide with an easy laugh and is eager to share his love of birds and nature in the years to come. We know you will have a great time traveling with him, too!

"Micah's natural history knowledge is impressive. His joyful, positive demeanor kept the groups spirits up despite the mud and rain. He was very mindful of the individual needs of the group. He always had a helping hand when it was needed." D.G., Succinct Suriname.

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for complete tour schedules for both Bret and Micah; just click on their photos.

Financial Information

FEE: \$8575 from Recife and ending in Salvador (includes flights within Brazil)

FEE FOR EXTENSION: \$1795 (includes flights within Brazil)

DEPOSIT: \$850

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: July 22, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$950 for main tour; \$300 for extension

LIMIT: 12

Other Things You Need to Know

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

DOCUMENTS: A current passport is necessary for US citizens to enter Brazil.

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.

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.

VACCINATIONS: Yellow fever is widespread in many parts of Brazil, and we recommend all travelers to Brazil be vaccinated against the disease. Please check <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/yellow-fever> for the current CDC information and consult with your physician about whether the vaccine is appropriate for you (there are contraindications for some individuals).

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.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$8575 for one person in double occupancy from Recife and ending in Salvador. It includes all lodging from Day 2 (January 19) through Day 16 (February 2), all meals from lunch on Day 2 through dinner on Day 17, flights within Brazil, all ground transportation, entrance fees, 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 tour fee does not include your airfare to and from Brazil, 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 main tour is \$950. 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).

The fee for the **Fernando de Noronha pre-tour Extension** is \$1795 for one person in double occupancy from **Recife**. It includes all lodging from Day 2 (January 17) through Day 3 (January 18), all meals from lunch on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 4, flights within Brazil, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling, plenty of water and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leader(s).

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

The **single supplement** for the extension tour is \$300. 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, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$850** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by July 22, 2024**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 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.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (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 that 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 airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

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, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (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 information from us 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, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

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 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. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible 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.

NCP 7/2020; 6/23 BW; 6/24 RK; 7/23peg; 6/24 peg
Updated 9/24peg