

ITINERARY

**PARADISE REVISITED: BIRDING THE
REMOTE UPPER RIO NEGRO, BRAZIL**

December 17-27, 2019



The remote upper Rio Negro near São Gabriel da Cachoeira is our destination! This is a view downriver a moment after lifting off from the airport there. Photo by guide Bret Whitney.

We include here information for those interested the 2019 Field Guides Paradise Revisited tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited
- 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

Christmas on the Equator... in Brazil, meaning the depths of Amazonia... wouldn't, or *would*, that be crazy? Indeed, it's a far-fetched plan, but then, "afar" is in our spirit, and "fetching" in our birding bones. And who wouldn't want to revisit *paradise*?* OK, it's settled; grab a ticket to Manaus, and Field Guides will do the rest!

Our gateway is Manaus, a mostly modern city of 2+ million, the largest population center in all of Amazonia. We'll fly some 850 km northwest to the little town of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, founded in 1668 and now supporting a population of about 13,000 mostly indigenous people. More than five miles wide near Manaus, the Negro is much narrower way up here; it is choked with rapids, and gorgeous white-sand beaches mark every curve. Based in a simple but comfortable hotel, we'll have easy access to extensive forest of several types on the left bank of the Rio Negro, including some patches of *campina* (low-stature forest on white-sand soils) habitat. Among the super-specialties of the upper Negro are Tawny-tufted Toucanet, Gray-bellied Antbird, Yellow-throated Antwren, Chestnut-crested Antbird, and Brown-headed Greenlet, and this is a good area for seeing some other little-known birds, like Brown-banded Puffbird, Fiery Topaz, Pavonine Quetzal, Pearly Antshrike, Cinnamon Manakin-Tyrant, Yellow-crowned Manakin, and Guianan (Rio Negro) Gnatcatcher. Even Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo is a realistic possibility.

After a few days birding around São Gabriel da Cachoeira, we'll transfer to our floating hotel, several hours down the Negro and up the Rio Marié, which is a right-bank, blackwater tributary of the Negro ("left" and "right" banks are defined as one faces downriver). Our lodge is a truly luxurious fishing boat that spends several months each year, during the best fishing season, on the Marié. This is indigenous territory, usually off-limits to outsiders, but the lodge has entered into a mutually beneficial agreement with the indigenous community and FUNAI (Brazilian Bureau of Indian Affairs) to allow a limited amount of visitation for appreciation of the natural environment, including catch-and-release fishing and birding tourism. We'll have several days to explore the lower/middle Marié region, probably moving position at least once to afford ideal access to different forest habitats. Because we'll be based on the boat, essentially a floating hotel, we'll have relatively short, easy transfers for night-birding excursions that could produce several species of owls and nightjars, potoos, and perhaps even Nocturnal Curassow!

Please note that your tour guide, Bret Whitney, may not have had a chance to visit the Marié area before the tour – although he will be trying to arrange some time in 2019 to get in there. Thus, we may be doing more original exploring than is usually the case on a Field Guides tour, but that can be very exciting and lots of fun – and we're sure to find a great variety of birds and mammals in these undisturbed forests. If the spirit of adventure is in you, and you are in reasonably good physical shape with good stamina for forest birding, you are going to immensely enjoy this unusual Christmas-season birding getaway to a remote region of the Amazon basin!

* We say "paradise revisited" because we used to do tours in the São Gabriel da Cachoeira region (before commercial flights were suspended for several years), and because many tour participants have birded the lower Rio Negro, nearer Manaus, on our "Rio Negro Paradise: Manaus" tours, which always run in September.



*White-fringed Antwren is one of the species we'll be looking for in the campinas.
Photograph by participant Markus Lagerqvist.*

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: Most days will see us up for breakfast before first light, then back to the hotel or the boat for lunch and a siesta. We'll be back afield in the afternoon, and we will offer optional owling trips on evenings or early mornings on the Rio Marié. Thus, the rhythm of our days will be overall quite relaxing. That said, we will often be birding on narrow, freshly opened trails up to 2.5 kilometers long (one-way; mostly about half of this) to access particular habitat types.

PLEASE NOTE that walking on these trails may be challenging and require heightened attention and good balance, as there may be lots of root masses, fallen trees, and rotting trunks to scramble over, small streams to wade or cross, perhaps on improvised log “bridges”, etc. You should be prepared to confront these kinds of obstacles on a regular basis, and for hundreds of meters of walking, on some 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. December is the early rainy season in this part of Amazonia, and the climate will be warm under generally cloudy skies, with temperatures ranging between about 72 and 90 F, with high humidity. To reach *terra firme* terraces for birding, on some days we may have to ascend steep dirt/mud banks. We will always have our crew cut steps into the bank to aid in going up and down, but these places can be quite tiring and difficult for some participants to negotiate.

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 for the tour.

About the Birding Areas



Terra firme forest—The far upper Rio Negro holds vast areas of uncut primary *terra firme* (never flooded) forest, most of it that will be accessible to us on level or gently undulating terrain. Species regularly occurring here and in neighboring habitats include Red-and-green and Blue-and-yellow macaws, Orange-cheeked Parrot, Fiery Topaz, Chapman's Swift, Black-necked and Lettered aracaris, Tawny-tufted Toucanet, Bar-bellied Woodcreeper, Curve-billed Scythebill, Golden-collared Woodpecker, Spot-backed Antwren, Yellow-throated Antwren, Pompadour Cotinga, Guianan Red-Cotinga (left bank) and Black-necked Red-Cotinga (right bank), Guianan (Rio Negro) Gnatcatcher, Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo, and a variety of tanagers including the seldom-seen Dotted Tanager. Army ant swarms may yield Chestnut-crested Antbird, Rufous-throated Antbird and the spectacular White-plumed Antbird.

Campina/campinarana is a forest habitat characterized by dense but patchy growth of bushes and short, scattered trees growing on white-sand soil, or (*campinarana*) thin-trunked trees of more-or-less uniform canopy height ranging from about fifteen to twenty-five feet. Many of the trees have narrow crowns and the canopy has few openings relative to taller forests. Not surprisingly, *campina* differs from the *terra firme* and tall *várzea* (seasonally flooded forest on whitewater river floodplains) forest not only in its community of plants, but also in its bird composition. We'll bird these restricted Amazonian habitats both around São Gabriel da Cachoeira and on the Rio Marié, where specialties include Bronzy Jacamar, Northern Slaty-Antshrike, Cherrie's Antwren, White-fringed Antwren, Yellow-crowned Manakin, Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakin, Campina Flycatcher (to be split from widespread Fuscous Flycatcher), and Brown-headed Greenlet.

Itinerary for Paradise Revisited: Birding the upper Rio Negro

Day 1, Tue, 17 Dec. Arrival in Manaus. At the time of publication of this itinerary, the best option for this tour is the daily American Airlines flight that departs Miami around 5:30 p.m. and arrives in Manaus about 11:50 p.m. This means you will probably not get through customs; driven to the hotel; checked in, and up to your room, until after midnight (customs and immigration are usually quite fast and efficient in Manaus). Those traveling on this late-arriving flight may want to arrive in Manaus a day early just to rest up, and in case your luggage doesn't make it on your flight. If you would like to do that, your Tour Manager will be happy to help with overnight arrangements at a hotel near the airport in Manaus. Night in Manaus.

Day 2, Wed, 18 Dec. Flight Manaus to São Gabriel da Cachoeira. Manaus, at the confluence of the Amazon and Negro rivers, is the capital of the huge state of Amazonas and has a growing population that already exceeds two million. We'll have an early breakfast at our hotel and get over to the airport by about 06:30 for the approximately 2.5 hour flight to São Gabriel da Cachoeira. After checking into our hotel and lunch, we'll head out for our initial bout of birding. Night in São Gabriel da Cachoeira.

Days 3-4, Thu-Fri, 19-20 Dec. São Gabriel da Cachoeira. We'll have two full days to bird around São Gabriel, concentrating on finding the upper Negro specialties mentioned above while enjoying a fine variety of more widespread species. About 25 km north of town, the Equator crosses the road, unceremoniously marked with a little sign and plaque; we'll get up there one afternoon to bird in hillier forest nearby, probably seeing some birds in both hemispheres! Nights in São Gabriel da Cachoeira.

Day 5, Sat, 21 Dec. The adventure continues, on this first day of the Southern Hemisphere summer (day-length will be almost exactly 12 hours), as we depart São Gabriel da Cachoeira via speedboat, heading down the Negro to cross to the south (right) bank at the mouth of the Rio Marié, a transfer of about 3 hours. Here there is a huge (unnamed?) island in the middle course of the Negro that has probably never been birded. Let's send our guys in to chop a path so we can check it out for a couple of hours or so, to get a bit of an idea of what might be present, paying special attention to any non-flooded forest species we might find. We'll probably do a picnic lunch there, then continue our way up the Rio Marié for another couple of hours to reach our floating hotel, *Untamed Amazon*, which will be anchored in the middle of nowhere. Night on the *Untamed Amazon*.



We'll have four full days to explore the wild Rio Marié, a right bank tributary of the remote upper Rio Negro. Our base will be the beautiful Untamed Amazon, with private, air-conditioned bedrooms and bathrooms, and an excellent bar and restaurant. See www.marieriver.com (a page of the "Untamed Angling" flyfishing website) for more photos and information.

Days 6-9, Sun-Wed, 22-25 Dec. Birding the Rio Marié. Actually, we plan to have *Untamed Amazon* waiting for us near the mouth of an *igarapé* (small Amazonian stream) that looks especially interesting on satellite imagery, as it meanders through a mosaic of *campina* and taller forest. This is a wild, sparsely inhabited region, indigenous territory. Everything is present here, from Jaguars, Tapirs, and Giant Otters to Harpy and Crested eagles, Bushmasters, and Nocturnal Curassows. We'll have these four days to explore the area by boat with outboard motor, and on foot, by day and by night. We'll no doubt be accompanied by indigenous guides who know the paths and waterways we'll want to bird – although the idea of bird-watching for fun is likely to be a novelty for them. We'll continue the search for upper Negro specialties like Tawny-tufted Toucanet and Chestnut-crested Antbird, among a long list of other *terra firme* forest birds. If we can get into some good *campinas*, which appear to be accessible in satellite imagery, we could potentially find the undescribed species of tody-tyrant that is sister to Pelzeln's Tody-Tyrant, found on the opposite bank of the lower Rio Negro, and, who knows, perhaps the rarely seen White-naped Seedeater (this would be a range extension for it, but it seems likely to occur in proper habitat). Among smaller mammals, we'll hope to find a troop of Golden-backed (or Brown) Uakari monkeys, and maybe even the little-known Mottle-faced Tamarin (which would be a lifer for Bret!). Nights on the *Untamed Amazon*.

Day 10, Thu, 26 Dec. Float plane flight to Manaus, and international departure. After a final early morning to bird the Marié, we'll pack up and board a float plane for the flight back to Manaus. Our flight path will take us over a vast sector of northern Amazonia rarely visible to tourists, a roadless, untouched part of our beautiful planet Earth, so let's keep fingers crossed for clear weather!

Our driver will meet us at the airport for the short drive to our hotel, where we'll have day rooms to grab a few hours of rest before dinner, then transfer to the airport for international connections. *Que tenham uma ótima viagem!*

Day 11, Fri, 27 Dec. Arrival in the States with connections home.

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. 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.

*"This was a wonderful tour! **Bret Whitney** has such amazing hearing and knowledge—he is like a bird maestro, and he shares so much as the tour unfolds. The different habitats and cities were amazing, beautiful, and with opportunities to learn about the country and culture while birding. We had amazing views of the birds, with the endemics really showing well...and Bret is so much fun to travel with. D.F., Nowhere But Northeast Brazil*

Please visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for a look at the complete tour schedules of all the guides.

Financial Information

FEE: \$8150 from Manaus

DEPOSIT: \$3000 per person *(This deposit is non-refundable; please see cancellation policy below for details.)*

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 19, 2019

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$850 (singles aboard the boat cannot be guaranteed but will very likely be available)

LIMIT: 7

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!

ACCOMMODATIONS: In Manaus, we will stay in the very nice Ibis Hotel near the airport. Our hotel in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, and restaurants there, are basic but comfortable. Our riverboat on the Rio Marié, where we will celebrate Christmas, is quite luxurious, featuring private, air-conditioned cabins with private bathrooms and a great bar and meals.

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. 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.

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/destinations/traveler/none/brazil> 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 \$8150 for one person in double occupancy from Manaus. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 9 (day rooms on Day 10), all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 10, 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 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 \$850; singles aboard the riverboat cannot be guaranteed. 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 LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, the guide in training will be taking a seat in the van or bus. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$3000** 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 August 19, 2019. 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: *Due to the cancellation policy of our supplier, Untamed Amazon, we must amend our usual cancellation policy as follows: The full deposit amount is non-refundable. 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 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, 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, and emergency medical transportation. **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 with InsureMyTrip (www.insuremytrip.com) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. Please let us know if you have any questions about this. If you purchase the insurance within 24 hours of 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 <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> 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.

1/19 BW; 3/19 RK, peg