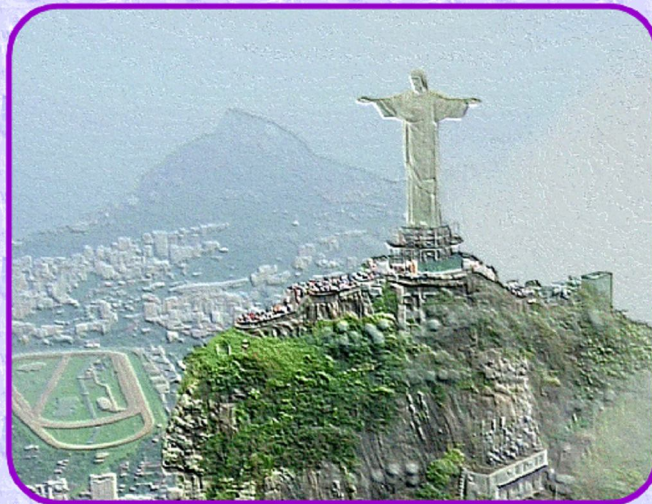
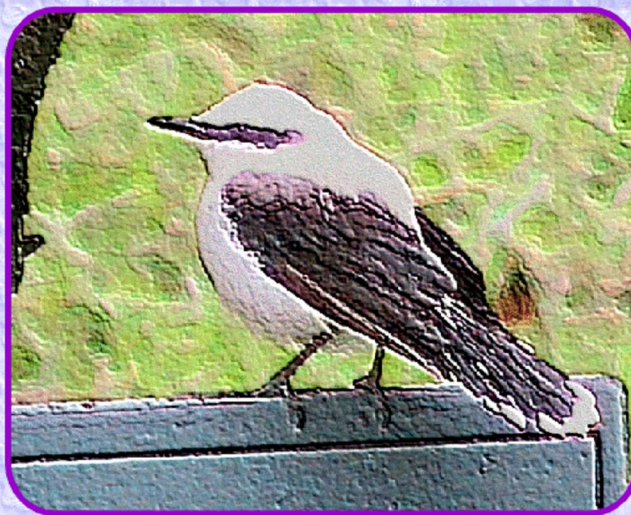


Rio de Janeiro



Brazil



24th to 28th February, 2005



24 th February	Botanical Gardens	11:30 - 16:30
25 th February	Copacabana Beach	17:00 - 18:30
26 th February	Ilha do Bernhado ("Topical Island")	15:20 - 16:30
27 th February	Tijuca Forest Botanical Gardens	06:45 - 12:00 12:45 - 16:00

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

February 24th to 28th, 2005

Introduction



Five days in Rio de Janeiro included a couple of sessions pure birding over a period of one full day and one half day. We stayed in the Le Meridien hotel on the eastern end of the Copacabana Beach, one of many high rise hotels adjacent to the rather bland 4km length of the beach. The beach fills up exponentially with people as the day progresses, but some good birds can even be found in this area (Swallow-tailed Hummingbirds, tyrant flycatchers, and Masked Water-Tyrants in the broken avenue of trees, passing seabirds over the water, and a few extra common species around the military premises at the end, although you have to be wary of using optics here). Buses do go from the hotel regularly, but the yellow taxis which constantly pass by were recommended to me – they are relatively inexpensive and safe to use. The unit of currency in Brazil is the Real. These can only be bought from within the country, and are useful for incidentals such as taxi fares, snacks, etc. Larger purchases can be by either \$US (apparently £UK also but I didn't put this to the test), and credit cards.

When I initially found out that I was going to Rio, my first reaction was that any birds seen would be incidental, since I harboured the worry that safety was a high priority here, which would limit flexibility of travel, and that movement per se in such a country with a small amount of free time to spend would limit the distance I could go. The worry about safety seems to be well founded – wandering around at night in anything other than a large group is a definite no, but even daylight hours can present a significant chance of crime (bearing in mind that birding usually entails carrying around a clump of expensive equipment). That is the down side over with, because there is also a significant up side to the birds within the city. Aside from the usual sites that Rio has to offer the day to day tourist, it also contains within the city boundaries one of the largest urban forest parks in the world - the Tijuca Forest, and the south-eastern edge of this forest is bounded by the Botanical Gardens, which are quite large and safe to cover.

Before departing for Brazil, I had attempted to get a guide ahead of time, knowing that one of the days in Rio would be free. After looking on the Birdingpal site (www.birdingpal.org), and doing a search for guides in the area, I did receive numerous replies. However, most were not able to help, since almost all seem to be based in Sao

Paolo, which is much larger than Rio, and a couple of hours drive to the South. I did get a positive reply from Richard Raby (rrabybrasil@yahoo.com), who is currently setting up a lodge for birders a little distance away from Rio. After meeting him at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water in August, we agreed on a days birding and the costs involved. However, since he lives some distance outside of Rio, the only practical way to do this was to be picked up the previous evening and stay in a hotel near to the sites, which we were unable to do. He ruled out picking us up early morning due to safety worries. He did give us some useful information on birding in the Rio city vicinity. Our birding therefore consisted of two main sites, and also some incidental time on one of the tropical offshore islands:

The Jardim Botânico do Rio de Janeiro (www.jbrj.gov.br)



This botanical garden covers quite a large area (137 hectares, with 54 hectares of forest). The North-western edge of the gardens bound the lower slopes of the Tijuca Forest, hence the potential to feast on forest species that would not normally touch an urban based environment. The two main entrances are on the Rua Jardim Botânico road, and both have security guards posted. Entrance cost is 4 Reals (about £1). The journey from the hotel to the gardens cost between 12 and 16 Reals (£3-£4) depending on the traffic, and taxis were very easily flagged down outside of the gardens on return. Free maps are available, but there are also regular maps of the area posted throughout the gardens, with the always helpful "you are here" logos for lost souls.

The Tijuca Forest

This forest is almost wholly surrounded by the greater city of Rio, but is a fabulous place to see a range of South American birds. Buses do not generally go to the entrances for the forest, and taxis do not pass the exits in any appreciable numbers, so it is best for casual birding visitors to use the services of a guide. We used a fellow called Al (Alcides Maia: e-mail alcidesmaia@hotmail.com; tel 55 (021) 9294-2704), who turned up at the hotel at 6am with a jeep and driver, and cost us \$135 for the 6 hour trip. This is well worth the money and time, since it expands the amount of species and diversity that can be seen in the botanical gardens. His method was to walk the tarmac roads throughout the forest, in addition to visiting one or two sites such as a waterfall and small pond, and walk slowly along listening and looking for birds. Being typical forest birding, these were in fits and starts, but some impressive birds were seen during the morning.

Ilha do Bernardo

One of the days in Rio consisted of an organised cruise to this small tropical island. We were driven 1½ hours to the North of Rio by coach, then transferred to a small boat for transport to the island. On the downside, it rained almost all day, making the boat ride in particular more than a little uncomfortable. On the plus side, the small island presented an opportunity for more birding (up a small track to its summit), with some species being seen only here. Seabirds were in small numbers, but a couple of skuas were observed over the sea, and 2 species of caracara were also seen from the boat.

Timing and weather

January in Brazil is almost the middle of Summer, and Rio lies on the Tropic of Capricorn. The sun is thus almost vertically above, and hence has some heat blasting down on the area. However, it is also probably the wettest part of the year (the rainforest is presumably there for a reason!), and so temperatures can vary between 20°C when it is raining, and mid 30's plus when the sun is out. We experienced both! It is therefore worth packing both sun block and wet weather gear. Apparently, the best time for a birding visit is between August and October, which is Spring time, and also generally drier. The wet weather did bring out some biting insects. Sunrise in the morning was about 6:15, and sunset around 19:15.

References

I couldn't find an ideal book on the identification of Birds in Brazil. There is one available ("All the birds of Brazil" by Deodato Souza), but I didn't manage to locate a copy, and the write up seems to indicate that the illustrations are basic. Two books that are useful cover the North and South of the area:

"Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica", by Martín de la Peña and Maurice Rumboll, a Collins Illustrated checklist, is portable and covers a good percentage of the potential birds. The descriptions are basic and the drawings adequate.

"Birds of Venezuela", by Hilty, published by Princeton Press, is an excellent backup, since it again covers a good percentage of the potential species, and has good illustrations with even better descriptions.

SITES

Arrival at Rio

(Day 1)

Fortunate to have the window seat on the incoming flight, the first birds of South America for me were numerous Great Egrets in their hundreds lining the banks of the rivers and concreted estuaries of Rio, just before touching down at the airport. The first of the Black Vultures were also seen just before landing (and on the short trek to the airport terminal). It was these 2 species, along with the as usual ubiquitous feral pigeons, which were easily the most numerous species evident. One or two swallows were seen on the journey but were not seen well enough for identification. The only other species of note on the journey to the hotel were 2 Roadside Hawks, doing exactly what their name suggested, sat on perches next to the main highway. On arrival at the hotel, and from the hotel room itself, streams of hundreds of Magnificent Frigatebirds passed along the length of Copacabana Beach towards thermals around Sugarloaf Mountain.



The Botanical Gardens

After hurriedly unpacking and putting together all the equipment required for an afternoon's birding, I stepped out of the hotel and quickly caught one of the multitudinous yellow cabs. Despite the fact that there is a direct bus service to the Botanical Gardens from the hotel, this method of transport across town was slow, and I

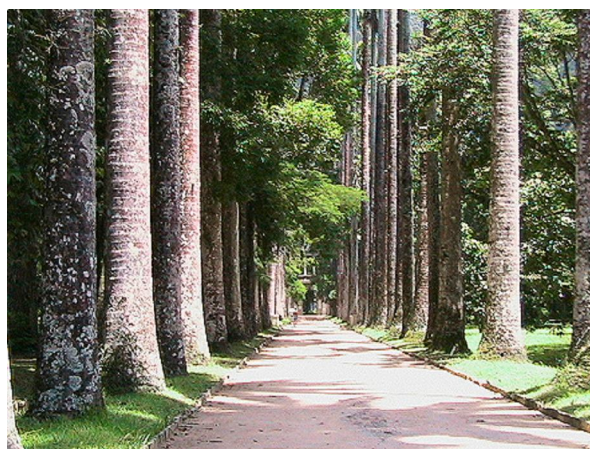
was advised that the yellow cabs were safe to use and the best option. This proved to be the case, with the journey only taking about 20 minutes and costing 11 Real (around £3). The taxi dropped me off outside the gate, where entrance fee was only 4 Real.



The location of the Botanical Gardens is on the outskirts of the main city, which still means that it is bounded by suburbanisation. Yet it is quite a sizeable oasis, and as time progresses, it can be seen to be rich in birds. There are also plenty of people meandering around the numerous soft tracks of the gardens, but they only occasionally form a disturbance problem. At first, it seemed that the park was full of kingbirds, Short-crested Flycatchers, Southern Rough-winged Swallows, Kiskadees, and small groups of escaped Waxbills. During the first 1½ hours, I walked the length of the gardens, which is about 500-600 metres. This turned up many more species, in particular Masked Water-Tyrant, Blue Dacnis, and male Violet-capped Woodnymph hummingbird. At around 1:20pm, I received a text from a birding colleague who was by then also on his way to the gardens.

As soon as we met up at the entrance to the gardens, we found ourselves watching another 3 Masked Water-Tyrants. From the same spot, and following a loud call, we had excellent views of a Channel-billed Toucan, which was a little surprising in such an urban park. We spent the next 2½ hours wandering the gardens. Initially, birds were a little bit few and far between. Then, in the corner of the gardens, we spent about an hour in a continuous passage of bird parties or feeding individuals. Tanagers in the guise of Sayaca & Palm predominated, in addition to Kiskadees, the odd Social Flycatcher, and more Short-crested Flycatchers. In amongst these were less numerous and newer birds (to us), including Swallow-tailed Hummingbirds, Black Jacobin, Yellow-lored Tody-Flycatcher, and at least 5 Green-headed Tanagers.

Having seen some Brazilian Squirrels earlier in the day, rustling in the trees above was mainly ignored, until we realised that this was due to the presence of Common Marmosets. We eventually managed to pin down around half a dozen of these wonderful



little primates. Time was marching on, but the birds kept appearing, with notable additions of 2-3 Plain Parakeets and much greater numbers of Maroon-bellied Parakeets (initially not showing any red on the belly, they were eventually found to sport this feature). I had seen 2 Grey-necked Wood-Rails when first wandering around the gardens alone, but just as we were about to leave, with an exclamation of "so much for any more Wood-Rails!", we coincidentally looked to the left to the sight of a limping individual right out in the open.

Leaving the gardens to return to the hotel was easy. There were plenty of yellow taxis passing by, and we even found one stationed directly outside of the main entrance touting for business. The taxi took us along the length of Ipanema and Copacabana Beaches, which were largely uninteresting apart from the numerous Magnificent Frigatebirds still patrolling above. On closer inspection, small numbers of Brown Boobies could be seen passing lower down over the sea.

Walk along Copacabana Beach

(Day 2)



After a full days conference session, we escaped the hotel at about 5pm. Time only allowed for a walk alongside the beach to the military buildings at the end of the promenade. We had been told that this could be visited and the birds looked for in the wooded installation, but it appeared that entrance was only on a Saturday, and cameras not allowed. Amazingly, and despite the surrounding busy urbanisation, there were quite a few birds to be seen in the tree lined avenue and around the installation. Most common were Tropical Kingbirds, as well as both Sayaca & Palm Tanagers, but almost equally as common were very busy Swallow-tailed Hummingbirds. Before we were ushered away from the military buildings, we did manage to see a gradually increasing number of *hirundines*. These were initially seen to consist almost exclusively of Rough-winged Swallows, but we eventually managed to pick out a few Blue-and-white Swallows, and latterly some of the larger Brown-chested Martins. As time progressed, these *hirundines* came closer, eventually flying around us and just around our heads. Surprisingly, there was also a pair of Masked Water-Tyrants on the lawn here.

Cruise to Ilha do Bernado

(Day 3)

Rain seemed to have fallen constantly through the night, and was still doing so at 7:30 after breakfast. Always looking on the bright side, this also seemed to have kept human disturbance on the beach to a minimum. I spent just over an hour getting shots of the few species of seabirds from the waters edge. These consisted of 3 types, with Magnificent Frigatebirds in abundance, and also the odd Brown Booby passing by quite close to the shore. There was also a small collection of 4-5 Kelp Gulls early on, and the strange sight of 2 Tropical Kingbirds hopping around the sand looking for insects on the ground. As the hour progressed, the rain slowed almost to a stop, although the clouds overhead seemed to indicate that this would be anything but a dry day.

As we departed the hotel at 9:30 and travelled North to our embarkation point for the cruise, the weather gradually deteriorated to a rain soaked day. From the coach, Smooth-billed Anis could be seen in some numbers when the last of the ramshackled buildings of the city were finally left behind, but not much else was to be seen. The boat pulled up at the dock in the continuing deluge, and we were at first glad to see that there was a cover over it. This only handed out a marginal respite, however, since the higher winds at sea provided ample opportunity for a soaking. The cruise lasted around 2 hours, and through the murk we made out Crested Caracaras on top of the predicted passing Brown Boobies and Magnificent Frigatebirds. Once at the island, we made straight for the covered restaurant and its tantalising delicacies. While tucking into the nosh, the rain gradually reduced to a light sprinkle, and we made the most of the last hour on the island. The island we were on was part of an 18 mile chain of sandbanks and tropical islands off the coast, and was quite small (probably no more than 100-200 metres in length), and seemed to consist of 2 joined hillocks which were tree covered. One of these hillocks had a path to the summit, and it was this that we climbed for our short birding session.



Despite the small size of the island, it did hold an interesting population of birds, some of which were only seen here. Among the usual noise and sight of the ubiquitous Bananaquits, we found Tanagers in the form of Brazilian & Sayaca (with a yellow/orange headed grey species later to be identified as Orange-headed Tanager), a couple of Red-eyed Thornbirds, Rufous-crowned Greenlet, Velvety Black-Tyrant, and a female Masked Yellowthroat. On the initial ascent, we had disturbed a Yellow-headed Caracara from its treetop perch.

The journey back was uneventful, and slightly drier, but we did see a tree full of Roseate Spoonbills on the approach to Rio.

The Tijuca Forest

(Day 4)



After some discussion with the organisers of the conference over the last few days, they managed to put me in touch with a chap called Al, who was able to organise a mornings birding in the Tijuca Forest. He and his driver picked us up in a jeep at 6am at the hotel. In the clearing rain, they took us on a half an hour ride to the forest, and we started to bird along one of the tarmacked tracks through the forest from our drop off point. The rain had now stopped, and under the cloud and sight of the Christ the Redeemer statue, a few birds started to show, the first being a trio of Green-headed Tanagers. As time went by, and the light quickly improved, bird parties started to appear with a vengeance. Most of these parties seemed to be in clearings over the track, and could be quite mixed bunches of species. Initially difficult to identify, but easy to see Flycatcher, turned out to be Sepia-capped, one or two of which were seen later on in the walk. The earlier Green-headed Tanagers were added to by very close and feeding Red-necked Tanagers, seemingly constantly backed up by Golden-crowned Warblers, feeding and calling continuously in small flocks. Small ant eating birds were represented by superb views of Sooretama Slaty-antshrrike and almost at the end of the first walk a couple of Scaled Antbirds. All had been preceded by a very noisy but difficult to see Star-throated Antwren, which eventually showed well briefly but rewardingly. Just before being picked up by the jeep again, we found a few euphonias feeding on small fruiting trees next to the path (including a couple of male Chestnut-bellied Euphonias), and a Laughing Falcon was found perched on the other side of the valley. At the end of this walk, the rain started to fall in earnest again, and was to continue for almost all of the day.

We were then taken to a quite spectacular waterfall in the forest. We were led through a short track to this, and saw only one bird well here - a Buff-throated Saltator. At the waterfall, the rain continued to fall even harder, but was not sufficient to hide a small raptor just above the tumbling torrent – a Plumbeous Kite. While watching it, the bird left its perch and caught a lizard from next to the falls.



The last stop with Al was at a small pool at the edge of the forest. He had optimistically promised duck here, but none were to be seen. This was more than made up by a brief view of a Rusty-margined Guan, which was high in the trees in a small clearing through the leaves. In addition to the numerous Social Flycatchers and Great Kiskadees, were Yellow-lored Tody-Flycatcher, as well as a pair of Violaceous Euphonias seen just before we left for the Botanical Gardens, and a Streaked Flycatcher flew in and perched some way off at the opposite side of the pool.

The Botanical Gardens

Al had dropped us off at a different entrance to the gardens from that taken on Monday, since he told us of the best way to reach the forest margin of the gardens. After paying our fee, we were heading to the entrance of the gardens proper, but were diverted by a Cliff Flycatcher hawking insects from a house roof, and small numbers of Double-collared Seedeaters feeding on a lawn.



After a tasty lunch of quiche at the café, we headed through the gardens in the rain to explore the lower slopes of the Tijuca Forest within the gardens. This proved to be quite a fruitless search, only turning up a Grey-necked Wood-Rail and some distant passerines in the canopy. We spent a couple of hours searching the gardens again, and it was noticeable that activity was less than on Monday, when the weather was much brighter and more settled. Most obvious birds today were Tropical Kingbirds, Palm Tanagers, and Great Kiskadees. However, more Channel-billed Toucans were seen today, and even better and more static views of Swallow-tailed Hummingbird and a female Violet-capped Woodnymph. Roadside Hawk was also seen perched at the top of a conifer here, and as we left the gardens, a superb male Purple-throated Euphonia was in the area of the seedeaters and, naturally, a further pair of Masked Water-Tyrants.



Common Marmoset



Dragonfly

SPECIES SEEN

Brown Booby

Sula leucogaster

These were regularly passing the Copacabana Beach, some quite close to the shore. ~20 were seen there on the Monday, with lower numbers on the Wednesday, but much higher numbers passed early on the Friday, some in lines of up to 10 birds at a time. ~20 were seen from the cruise to and from the Ilha do Bernardo

Neotropic Cormorant

Phalacrocorax brasilianus

Seen on most days, usually from the Copacabana Beach, with a maximum of ~30 on the Wednesday

Magnificent Frigatebird

Fregata magnificens

This was one of the most obvious and numerous species. Huge numbers were almost always evident on the coast, often seeking thermals in large groups before moving on. They were even seen flying past the helicopter on a ride around the statue of Christ



Great Egret

Ardea alba

These were in their hundreds along the rivers, particularly from the road between the airport and the city of Rio. They were even quite obvious from the aeroplane before landing. The best views were of one to two birds in the Botanical Gardens, where one bird passed by me while fishing in a stream, only feet away. This bird still had the breeding plumes attached



Snowy Egret

Egretta thula

These were probably in much better numbers than the 10 or so counted from the coach on the journey to Ilha do Bernardo, but the speed of the bus meant that they couldn't be separated very easily

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Only seen in one large group of perhaps a hundred individuals next to the perimeter fence of the airport on the return from the cruise

Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

One seen flying over the river between the airport and the city on the way to the cruise. A group of 4 birds also flew past the airport terminal before departure on Friday afternoon

Roseate Spoonbill

Platalea ajaja

~10 birds were in a tree adjoining a river inlet from the coach on the return journey from the Ilha do Bernardo

Black Vulture

Coragyps atratus

Extremely common, possibly second only to Magnificent Frigatebird in numbers. Hundreds were seen on most days, often catching thermals before moving on. They could also be seen perched almost anywhere, even on roadsides and on exposed mud around rivers

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura

Only 4 seen – over the Botanical Gardens on Thursday afternoon

Plumbeous Kite

Ictinia plumbea

A single bird was found perched above an open waterfall in the Tijuca Forest, looking totally soaked in the pouring rain. While watching, it flew down to the edge of the

waterfall and returned with a lizard. It spent a short time on its feast, before being relocated on a more distant exposed perch

Roadside Hawk

Buteo magnirostris

2 were seen from the coach on the initial transfer from the airport on Monday morning, doing as their name suggests – perching on posts either beside or not far from the main road. A bird in the Botanical Gardens on Thursday was perched high on a single conifer. While waiting in my room for the departure of the coach to the airport on the Friday morning, a fourth bird circled upwards in front of the window, and a fifth bird was seen from the airport terminal, perched on a post on the opposite side of the main road

Southern Caracara

Caracara plancus

This species was at one time part of the Crested Caracara complex, but has now been separated as a distinct species. The main visual difference seems to be that it is white around the back of the neck and throat than the more buffy coloured Crested. The first birds were a real surprise, with 2 from the boat on the way to the Ilha do Bernardo – one landed on a small island that we passed on the way. A third bird was seen from the coach on the return journey. After checking in at the airport on return, a short watch outside the departure terminal found 6 birds in a semi open area opposite the airport

Yellow-headed Caracara

Milvago chimachima

A single bird was disturbed from a perch above the path towards the summit on the Ilha do Bernardo

Laughing Falcon

Herpetotheres cachinnans

What was at first thought to be a Yellow-headed Caracara, perched in the open on a tall bare tree in the Tijuca Forest, proved to be this species. The bird was a little distant, but the first giveaway was the dark mask through the eye



Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

2 seen, both very close. The first must have been perched on the Le Meridien hotel at breakfast on the Tuesday morning (7:30am approx), since it was seen to dive away from here, circle a few times, and then return right in front of us to the hidden ledge above. A second bird performed a flypast outside the airport terminal building on the Friday afternoon

Rusty-margined Guan

Penelope superciliaris

A single bird was picked out high up, almost in the canopy, in a slight opening of the trees surrounding a pool just within the boundary of the Tijuca Forest

Grey-necked Wood-Rail

Aramides cajanea

These were surprisingly found out in the open in the Botanical Gardens, with 3 on the first visit, and 6 on the second. Although there were pools and small lakes within the gardens, where they were expected to be found, all seen were usually out in the open away from open water.



Southern Lapwing

Vanellus chilensis

8 were seen in open grassy fields on the return from the cruise, before reaching the outskirts of the city. While waiting for the helicopter to return on Friday morning, a single bird was seen on the grass next to the helipad

Great Skua

Catharacta skua

One from the boat returning from Ilha do Bernardo

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

A light phase bird past the boat on the return from Ilha do Bernardo

Kelp Gull*Larus dominicanus*

Seen in small numbers along the coast, with a maximum of ~20 on Wednesday, when a few on Copacabana Beach on the morning were added to by a small group on a jetty from the cruise

**Ruddy Ground-Dove***Columbina talpacoti*

Strangely, the best place for these was along the broken avenue that was the road running adjacent to the Copacabana Beach, with about 8 on Tuesday. A few birds were also seen in the Botanical Gardens

Red-shouldered Macaw*Diopsittaca nobilis*

A couple of small groups of these birds were seen in the Botanical Gardens on Thursday. Their size and shape initially indicated parakeets, but they were seen to have a distinctive white eye ring to lores facial pattern, and the reddish-orange shoulder patches could also be made out

Maroon-bellied Parakeet*Pyrrhura frontalis*

Many groups of parakeets and small macaws were seen in the Botanical Gardens, with a few more over the Tijuca Forest. However, since many were flyovers, they could not be specifically identified. However, a group of ~20 of this species was pinned down 3 times on Monday, each time being successively closer, and they could then be positively identified. Although the red in the belly could be seen on some of the birds, this usually depended on the angle seen and the light, and may have even been absent or hidden on many of the birds

**Plain Parakeet***Brotogeris tirica*

2 were in the Botanical Gardens on Monday, and 6 were together in the gardens on Thursday afternoon

Smooth-billed Ani*Crotophaga ani*

At least 20 birds were seen from the coach on the outward and return journeys to the Ilha do Bernardo on Wednesday

Dusky-throated Hermit*Phaethornis squalidus*

4 hermit hummingbirds are known to frequent the area – Saw-billed, Rufous-breasted, Reddish, and Dusky-throated. 3 hermit hummingbirds were seen in the Botanical Gardens, and were constantly on the move. This meant that they were difficult to see in their entirety. However, the noted combination of buff-bordered dark face mask, buffy underparts, and white only on the tips of the tail feathers define at least the third bird, where all these characters could be seen, as this species

Swallow-tailed Hummingbird*Campylopterus macrourus*

These are quite large hummingbirds, and their forked tails can be quite spectacular when seen well. However, they are not always splayed, particularly in flight, and merely look like a longish tail. They are quite common and very easy to see, so much so that birds are obvious even along the main avenue of trees adjacent to the Copacabana Beach, where we saw at least 6 on one walk. They can also be seen well in the Botanical Gardens, where they are the most obvious of the hummingbirds. 6 were seen on Tuesday and Thursday, with at least 4 on Monday

**Black Jacobin***Florisuga fuscus*

Only 1 was seen, in flight while feeding in the Botanical Gardens on the first visit

Violet-capped Woodnymph*Thalurania glaucopis*

The purple crown on these birds can actually be quite hard to see (best viewed on video playback), and the other features of note – the forked tail and white undertail coverts –

can also be hidden much of the time. The 2 birds that showed particularly well at the Botanical Gardens on Monday were generally typical of this, but were seen long and well enough for identification, with the video displaying all these characters well. On the return visit on the Thursday, a female was found huddled on a branch hiding from the pouring rain



Channel-billed Toucan

Rhamphastos vitellinus

We were very pleased with the close views of one of these birds at the Botanical Gardens on Monday, but one of our Brazilian guides was surprised that we had just seen the one there. This was made up for on Thursday, when our return to the gardens turned up at least 5 birds, the first pair of which were again very close and eager to please!

White-barred Piculet

Picumnus cirratus

This is a family of woodpeckers that I had been wanting to see for some time, and it took a visit to the Tijuca Forest and some walking along one of the tarmac roads to finally pin one down. The bird seen was part of a mixed tanager and warbler bird party, seen about ¾ of an hour into the walk. It was quite approachable, feeding on a narrow branch next to the road at eye level

Red-eyed Thornbird

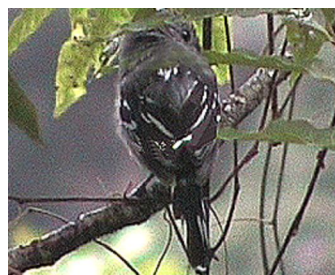
Phacellodomus erythrophthalmus

A pair of these birds was one of the first species to be seen well on the path through the trees on Ilha do Bernardo

Sooretama Slaty-antsrike

Thamnophilus ambiguus

Just before the first major bird party along the road in the Tijuca Forest, this bird was quietly foraging next to the road, within the cover of bushes. Seen well but probably for less than a minute



Star-throated Antwren

Myrmotherula gularis

This species tends to be very elusive, or at least tends to keep to thick undergrowth and remains hard to pin down. It is also a bird that looks good in the books, but is even better first hand. The individual we saw was amongst the first species seen on the walk through the Tijuca Forest. Luckily, it was calling loudly, but took a little time to pin down, despite the fact that it was in vegetation bounding the edge of the road. Before disappearing, the bird was seen well – almost tailless, with obvious white spots dotting a grey throat. Nice bird!

Rufous-winged Antwren

Herpsilochmus rufimarginatus

These smaller antbird families can have some striking species which are very nicely marked. The rufous primaries (and secondaries?) on the pair of birds seen in the Botanical Gardens on our first visit fall into this category – small birds and very nice to watch

Scaled Antbird

Drymophila squamata

This pair of birds continued a good run of smaller and striking antbirds. They were first picked up on call, again in bushes right next to the road in the Tijuca Forest. Both birds seen shared the black and white scaled plumage, and one seemed to be feeding the other, so they may have been a male parent feeding a juvenile male

Greenish Schiffornis

Schiffornis virescens

1 bird next to the road on the walk through the Tijuca Forest

Grey-hooded Flycatcher*Mionectes rufiventris*

1 bird seen only – part of the mixed bird party seen along the track in the Tijuca Forest

Sepia-capped Flycatcher*Leptopogon amaurocephalus*

2 birds were seen in the Tijuca Forest, the first particularly well. As with most new world flycatchers, they can be tricky to separate when first seen, and this bird was no exception. The sepia coloured cap is by no means obvious, although the second bird did display this feature at times. However, the face pattern can be quite distinctive, with dark ear patches, along with buff coloured wing bars, which both birds showed well

**Yellow-lored Tody-Flycatcher***Todirostrum poliocephalum*

These are tiny birds, and according to the guide we used for the forest, difficult to see. We were thus pleased to have picked up 3 in the Botanical Gardens on the first visit, and a further 3 at the gardens and forest on the Thursday. As well as being small, they are also very active, not staying in one place for long, but the yellow lores and white eye can be very obvious with patience

Cliff Flycatcher*Hirundinea ferruginea*

The only bird seen was an individual hawking for insects from the roof of a small bungalow within the grounds of the Botanical Gardens

Velvety Black-Tyrant*Knipolegus nigerrimus*

Two sightings of what may have been the same bird were on the Ilha do Bernardo, the first on the track up to the summit, the second in a small clearing while waiting for the boat to depart. Almost all black, they seemed to have a small white mark in the region of the primary base, and two small "prongs" of feathers from the centre of the tail

Masked Water-Tyrant*Fluvicola nengeta*

This species was something of a surprise, since it was much more urbanised than I had expected, and very approachable. There was even a pair at the end of the road adjacent to the Copacabana Beach, with the birds seen feeding next to the military installation, and also on the beach itself. Other birds were seen in the Botanical Gardens, where there were at least 3 pairs. 2 of these were next to water (one a stream, the other an ornamental Japanese type pool), but the third pair was near the entrance to the gardens, feeding on a lawn

**Great Kiskadee***Pitangus sulphuratus*

Noisy as always, the birds present were predictably obvious, but not in the numbers I would have expected (most was ~30 birds on the first day, in the Botanical Gardens). The only other day they were seen was on the Thursday, with up to 10 in the forest and gardens

**Social Flycatcher***Myiozetetes similis*

In smaller numbers than the Kiskadees, they had a markedly different call and bill shape (as well as being a little smaller). Up to 6 were in the Botanical Gardens, and 3 around the pool in the Tijuca Forest

Streaked Flycatcher*Myiodynastes maculatus*

A single bird landed and perched for some time on the opposite side of the pool before leaving the Tijuca Forest

Short-crested Flycatcher*Myiarchus ferox*

These were only seen at the Botanical Gardens, and were in reasonable numbers (10's).

They tended to keep more to the lower understory of the vegetation than Tropical Kingbirds

Tropical Kingbird

Tyrannus melancholicus

More commonly seen than the above, perhaps more due to its habits of sitting on open or high perches. Some were even seen along the road bordering the Copacabana Beach



Grey-breasted Martin

Progne chalybea

A single bird flew close past the airport terminal before departure on the Friday afternoon. A few hirundines flying around the boat before sailing for the Ilha do Bernardo may also have been this species, but the conditions were too poor for adequate observation

Brown-chested Martin

Progne tapera

~6 were among the *hirundine* flock hawking insects next to the military installation at the end of the Copacabana Beach on Tuesday

Blue-and-white Swallow

Pygochelidon cyanoleuca

4 birds were among the *hirundine* flock next to the military installation at the end of the Copacabana Beach on Tuesday

Southern Rough-winged Swallow

Stelgidopteryx ruficollis

Quite easily the most numerous of the *hirundines*. 20+ were buzzing in and out of the trees at the Botanical Gardens on both visits. This species was also the most numerous (again 20+ in the *hirundine* flock next to the military installation at the end of the Copacabana Beach on Tuesday)



(Southern) House Wren

Troglodytes aedon

These were quite confiding, all but one being seen in the Botanical Gardens (5 on the first visit, and 2 on the second). The only other bird was next to the military premises at the end of Copacabana Beach. It is the nominate race which occurs here – the birds seen held their tails cocked a little more than expected from this species, and the eye stripe was not to be seen, although they generally did have an obvious pale eye ring



Rufous-bellied Thrush

Turdus rufiventris

This was the only thrush seen, and was obvious in the Botanical Gardens (~10 birds) and Tijuca Forest (6). They fed in the open grassy areas, and some of the birds were singing



House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

A few in the Copacabana Beach area

Rufous-crowned Greenlet

Hylophilus poicilotis

1 individual seen in the bushes from the track on Ilha do Bernardo

Common Waxbill

Estrilda astrild

At least 30 birds were in the Botanical Gardens, and seen on numerous occasions. As with the others of this species now seen on 3 other continents, these will have been introduced



Purple-throated Euphonia

Euphonia chlorotica

A superb male was in overhead vegetation in the Botanical Gardens

Violaceous Euphonia

Euphonia violacea

A pair of birds were near to the jeep at the pool just before departing the Tijuca Forest

Chestnut-bellied Euphonia

Euphonia pectoralis

~5 birds were feeding next to the road at the end of the walk in the Tijuca Forest. Most were males, but a female or juvenile with them could not be identified at the time – it lacked the chestnut undertail coverts, so was presumably not this species



Masked Yellowthroat

Geothlypis aequinoctialis

1 seen – a female from the track on the Ilha do Bernardo. Although female yellowthroats are notoriously difficult to separate, this is the only species which occurs in Brazil

Golden-crowned Warbler

Basileuterus culicivorus

At least 20 of these were seen in small flocks in the Tijuca Forest. They were constantly active, but quite easily approached. The subspecies which occurs here tends to have an orange hue to its crown, but, as with birds seen elsewhere (Trinidad), the crown colour is usually difficult to discern

Bananaquit

Coereba flaveola

Very common, and also heard when not even seen. The subspecies in this part of Brazil is fairly pale, with a light grey throat

Orange-headed Tanager

Thlypopsis sordida

This was a species we had not expected to see, despite the fact that its almost pan-Brazilian range includes the Rio area. A single individual was seen on the track up the Ilha do Bernardo. It is quite a distinctive bird, with light grey under parts, darker grey upper parts, and a yellow/orange head

Brazilian Tanager

Ramphocelus bresilius

4 were seen on the Ilha do Bernardo. They were much duller than expected (females or juveniles?), although the characteristic bill shape with a rounded pale base was easy to see (reminiscent of Silver-beaked Tanager)

Sayaca Tanager

Thraupis sayaca

This species is reputed to be closely related to the Blue-grey Tanager, and it is easy to see why. They are a little duller than that species, but do share a similar jizz and base colour. They were only slightly less common than Palm Tanager, and the 2 species were easy to separate once seen. ~30 were in the Botanical Gardens, ~10 in the vicinity of the military premises at the end of Copacabana Beach, and 1 on Ilha do Bernardo



Palm Tanager*Thraupis palmarum*

At least 50 birds were in the Botanical Gardens, and ~10 in the vicinity of the military premises at the end of Copacabana Beach

Green-headed Tanager*Tangara seledon*

These are THE chocolate box species that we saw, sharing the same glittering feathers on the head that many hummingbirds possess, but they are a very welcome bird to see at any time. They are also fairly easy to get close to. After the 4 in the Botanical Gardens on Monday, ~10 were in the Tijuca Forest (2 birds were the first birds seen in the forest at around 6:45am)

**Red-necked Tanager***Tangara cyanocephala*

Following closely behind the Green-headed Tanagers for colours are these birds – overall fairly green, but the males in particular possess a bright red neck with blue crown. One party of ~8 birds passed through, feeding on overhead bushes as they went

Blue Dacnis*Dacnis cayana*

A single bird was feeding just below the canopy in the Botanical Gardens

Double-collared Seedeater*Sporophila caerulescens*

Only seen at the Botanical Gardens, with at least 6 there on the Thursday. The first bird seen on the Monday was a female, whose identification was confirmed by the presence of a male later. The most obvious birds were on the Thursday – the 6 present near to the entrance of the gardens were very approachable, since they seemed used to the human intrusion as they constantly returned to the lawn to feed of the seeding grass

**Rufous-collared Sparrow***Zonotrichia capensis*

One was seen with the first of the male Double-collared Seedeaters on the Monday at the Botanical Gardens. 3 more were at the top staging of Sugarloaf Mountain

Buff-throated Saltator*Saltator maximus*

1 hopping through the undergrowth of a path up to the waterfall in the Tijuca Forest

Shiny Cowbird*Molothrus bonariensis*

~10 birds were feeding on one of the lawned areas of the Botanical Gardens on Monday

Chopi Blackbird*Gnorimopsar chopi*

A pair were preening in a tree in the Botanical Gardens on Monday. Good views were had, and they showed the “vaseline effect” of the feathers on the rear of the crown well

TOTAL SPECIES = 77