

Tiny diary of the 2015 Brazil Rio Negro trip:

June 2: Arrived Manaus. Went out for dinner with two other early arrivers.

June 3: Many people arriving. Went for tour of Manaus Opera House in AM. Well worth it. Got on board the Otter in the early afternoon. Went to see the meeting of the waters of the Rio Negro (black) and the Solimoe (muddy), was very clear interface. Went to see Queen Victoria water lilies with birds, rails, that live almost entirely on the lily pads. Also a nice caiman on the dock. Overnight travel across and up the river.

June 4: First canoe exploration - Orchids in bloom: Brassavola, Prosthechea, Brassia, Pleurothallis, Polystachya. Not in bloom: Maxillaria, Scuticaria, Scaphyglottis, 2 types cacti. Then breakfast. Afternoon canoe trip – In bloom: Sobralia, Dichaea, several Epidendrums, Brassavola, Prosthechea Not in bloom: Brassavola with pods, Moonflower cactus, Dichaea.

June 5: Canoe trip – Brassavola with bromeliad (lots of bromeliads everywhere, Dichaea, hive of stingless bees, blue flowered legume, Tillandsia with long orange inflorescence, 30 ft tall Strelitzia. Huge lightning storm in PM. Visit Rubber museum, definitely not the life for me!

June 6: While boat goes from one inlet off the Rio Negro to another via the river, we take canoe through the woods, prospecting along the way. These forests are called 'Igapo'. Tree with densely leafed 'Neoporpax(???)', yellow Max brasiliensis, Monkeys flitting through the branches, white Maxillaria, trees with weaver bird nests and lots of ants, BIG Prosthechea. In PM – Yellow Trigonidium, Epi nocturnum(?), Dichaea (several), Max violacea-punctata, Polystachya estrellensis (?) Max pendens or amazonica, GALEANDRA DEVONIANUM (What an amazing orchid!) Scuticaria in flower, another amazing orchid.

June 7: Visited a campina in the AM – a coarse sand island with a whole different orchid flora, mostly not in bloom. Vanilla, Encyclias, Cattleya eldorado, BIG trees, pleurothallids, Bulbophyllum(?). In the PM Lots of Galeandra, Scuticaria, 2 parrots black w yellow crests, Cattleyas with pods, looked for Acacallis cyanea with no luck.

June 8: Artists went off to sketch from the canoe, I stayed on Otter, bird watching, black hawk with yellow face, Caracara (Daptrius ater) juvenile. Praying mantis on the bow rope. In the PM Cattleya violacea, moonflower cactus with tired flower, Then went for an amazing picnic lunch. Don't sit on ground – lots of tiny ticks. In the late PM went for cruise – lots of huge Schombo clumps.

June 9: Took artists to see Schombos, a few Cat violacea, visited Gilberto's river house with Margaret Mee memorial plaque, yellow headed Caracara. In PM drove Otter up through the Anavilhanas archipelago to see Cat violacea (many) and birds – Green parrots, Blue Macaws, White throated toucan. Collected C. violacea flower – Spread 13 cm, Dorsal 7 cm long, 3 cm wide, Lateral 5.8 cm long, 1.7 wide, lip, 5 cm long, 2.5 cm wide.

June 10: Shopping in Nova Airaon. Mostly travelled today, seeing lots more Cat violacea.

June 11 – Visited houseboat with free range pink dolphins that will come to fish offered by hand, also pirarucu in tank, a true monster of the deep, also went to beach on an island, swam a little. Last dinner on board, three types of fish in a great spread. Amazing what comes out of the 8'x8' kitchen!

June 12: Headed back to Manaus. While Otter travels in main channel we travel in canoe in side channel. 2 types of monkeys, squirrel monkeys come into canoe for bananas and generally have great time feeding them. Early lunch and disembark. Some to stay the night in the hotel, some to leave immediately.