

What's Blooming in the Pantanal?

By Nancy Thomas

The Pantanal is an immense tropical wetlands located mainly in western Brazil's Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul states. Renowned for its wildlife, it's home to hundreds of species of birds, along with fauna like jaguar, caiman, tapir and capybara. Summer rains flood the region, while the winter dry season creates plentiful lagoons where wildlife concentrate. Eco-lodges provide access to canoeing, horseback riding and hiking trails. – Wikipedia

In late July (Brazil's winter) we travelled to this unique place by flying to Cuiaba, Brazil, driving into the only portions of the northern half accessible by road, and then flying in a small plane to Jardim, near Campo Grande in the southern state. The Pantanal was wonderful for wildlife. It's renowned as the premier spot to see jaguars. We didn't have many opportunities



Broken down bridge along the Transpantaneira "highway"

to look for plants because we usually were in vehicles or boats, but some spring-blooming trees and shrubs were beginning to flower as spring was approaching. The place is definitely remote. The Transpantaneira "highway" that runs partway into the northern half is a dusty trip with broken down wooden bridges (93 I think), but loaded with birds. My neck and back are still trying to recover.



Cattleya nobilior, Found at Buraco das Arras in the south Pantanal near Jardim, but also seen in the north at SouthWild.

We spent four nights on a boat (called a "Flotel") on the Cuiaba River going out on small boats twice a day to look for jaguars, birds and other critters such as giant river otters. The animals were very cooperative! The other lodges where we stayed were on rivers or a



Photograph by Mike Samuel

Jaguar

ranch (where we took anteater-spotting trips in vehicles out in the fields).

The food was delicious, with loads of fresh fruit and juices at every meal. The people were amazingly friendly. Their national drink, the caipirinha, made of a distilled sugar cane liquor called cachaça and crushed limes, was delicious-
-I sampled it at each of our venues.

This *Oncidium cebolleta* was attached to a tree in the courtyard at SouthWild, in northern Pantanal, about half-way between Pocone and Porto Jofre. The leaves looked like *Brassovola nodosa* to me. ID was based on our guide's powerpoint on native orchids of the Pantanal.

