



Sunrise Birding LLC  
**GUYANA**  
November 2014  
**TRIP REPORT**  
by Diego Calderon



Photos top to bottom: Spotted Puffbird, Road to Kanuku Mountains, Blood-colored Woodpecker, Kaieteur Falls, Waved Woodpecker, Sun Parakeet by Diego Calderon.



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# GUYANA TRIP REPORT

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**Leaders: Ron Allicock, Diego Calderon & local guides**

## HIGHLIGHTS

(Rarities, specialties, or simply a group favorite):

- **Rufous-winged Ground Cuckoo**
- **Red Siskin**
- **Sun Parakeet**
- **Harpy Eagle**
- **White-winged Potoo**
- **Guyana Cock-of-the-rock**
- **Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin**
- **Grey-winged Trumpeter**
- **White-plumed Antbird**
- **Yellow-throated Woodpecker**
- **Ferruginous-backed Antbird**
- **Hoatzin**
- **Black Manakin**
- **Black Curassow**
- **Painted Parakeet**
- **Rio Branco Antbird**

### **Top birds chosen by the clients and guides for rarity, the experience, etc...**

There was a tie for the sixth place between the stunning Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, the unexpected lifer for nearly all, Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, those fun to watch Grey-winged Trumpeters, and the handsome White-plumed Antbirds. Fifth place went to the rare White-winged Potoo that made us return to the Canopy Walkway after dusk but showed really well. Third place was a tie between the stunning and rare Sun Parakeets we enjoyed at close range and the mighty Harpy Eagle chick we found near its nesting tree. Second place went for the gorgeous Red Siskin for all the effort spent to see them. First place went to the mythical and not easy to find Rufous-winged Ground Cuckoo that gave us such a show just three meters away from the group!

*Above, right: **Rufous Crab Hawk***

*(Photo: Diego Calderon)*

## **Nov 02**

During the day, most of the group landed in Georgetown (named after King George III of the United Kingdom). In the afternoon, some people looked for birds from the hotel balcony and saw Pale-breasted Thrush, Burnished-buff Tanager, Red-capped Cardinal, and even some Jacanas, Kingfishers, Cardinals and Pied Water Tyrant due to the system of water channels that flow all over the city. In the evening, we met at our hotel for dinner and an introductory talk by our local guide Ron Allicock.

## **Nov 03**

By 5:00 am we were already driving along the northern Guyana coast from Georgetown toward the "hoatzin" area. From the road we picked up Great and Cattle Egrets as well as Striated, Little Blue, and Tricolored Herons, and tons of Wattled Jacanas and Carib Grackles. We scrutinized some potential areas for Rufous Crab Hawk, one of our main targets, without success so we continued toward the area where our boat was going to pick us up. We drove through an amazingly active (for the time of day!) rice and plantation area and saw many Guyana countryside houses and working people. Almost

every house had the Hindu Vaisakhi colorful flags outside their houses, though they were a bit worn by wind and rain.

Upon arrival we nailed a lovely Spotted Tody-Flycatcher as well as a couple of Little Cuckoos and another of our day targets, the prehistoric looking Hoatzin, the national bird of Guyana! We boarded the boat not for so long as after less than one minute in the water we disembarked at our boatman's lovely house where we couldn't stop seeing birds. Wing-barred Seedeater came to the show while a couple of Cinereous Becards were building a nest. A Common Tody-Flycatcher was carrying nesting material, while dozens of Great Kiskadees, Rusty-margined Flycatchers, and Grey Kingbirds flew around. We also enticed a couple of Black-crested Antshrikes and two Barred Antshrikes to come out for nice views. At the river front home, we enjoyed one of the most scrumptious local breakfasts ever with curry potatoes and spicy tofu cubes and a thin tortilla like pan-cooked starch. Soon we were all literally licking our fingers.

After breakfast and before leaving we did a boat trip adding more common, but nice, birds to our day list. On our way out, we scanned every single palm tree, every single dead tree, everything along the main highway in search of our Rufous Crab Hawk but no luck. No need to panic Ron said to me all the time, we will stop at the mud flats. We indeed came to the mud flats, but they were flooded and we only saw Greater Yellowlegs and one Snowy Egret flying by. *"No need to panic!"*

Continuing on the main highway towards Georgetown we detoured a bit towards the shore and while enjoying beautiful Bicolored Conebills nesting, Carlos our local guide for the day and Ron directed us to run towards them as they had our target. One lovely Rufous Crab Hawk was perched and calling, near the seawall. What a brilliant raptor and all were pleased to see it!

We then went to hotel, had lunch, and then went to the Botanical Gardens to target a couple of important woodpeckers. We were enjoying some West Indian Manatees in the channels and lakes, when we heard the high pitch notes of one of our targets. Just a bit of playback and searching got us a splendid White-bellied Piculet female and we saw many more species after that in the gardens. We enjoyed some more common species as Mouse-colored Tyrannulets, a Violaceous Euphonia, and three Crimson-bellied Woodpeckers were seen. Scanning every single tree and branch of the Botanical Gardens proved worth as we got to see three or four different Blood-colored Woodpeckers, one of our regional endemic targets! It was a great day and a very nice way to be officially introduced to the avifauna of Guyana.

#### **Nov 04**

Mid-morning saw us boarding a **12-seat Cessna Caravan** at the smaller OGLE International airport to fly to the Iwokrama area with a stop at the Kaieteur Falls. The almost one hour flight over pristine forest was simply amazing with miles and miles of untouched forest covering flat areas and steeper rock faces. Some big extensions of gold mining were noted too,



but hopefully accounting for a low percentage of the forest cover. Our pilot was kind enough to fly us around the falls for a couple of times before landing and getting premier views of this monster cascade that is twice the height of Victoria Falls in Africa and four times the height of the North American Niagara Falls.

Upon arrival we got an American Golden Plover, quite an atypical migrant here in these somewhat higher elevation mountains (normally found less than 500 meters), and we also got Rufous-crowned Elaenias. *Drosera insectivorous sundews* plastered the sides of a wet section of a trail. We took a small forest trail searching for our first *Rupicola* and in less than 10 meters and 1 minute we were all having scope views of the local burning-orange colored male Guianan Cock-of-the-rock. Females were also in the area and we got point blank views of those as well. We taped in a Roraiman Antbird, one of those special and not so common antbirds in this area, but it came only for brief glimpses for some of our crew, not an easy one. We then took in the amazing falls from several different angles and distances on three different viewpoints and enjoyed how the Potaro River, coming from the Pakaraima Mountains, disappeared in this drop.



Heading back to the airstrip we got a nice surprise when a flowering tree held a lovely Crimson Topaz couple! We then finished our flight and got to Iwokrama River Lodge where birding the lodge grounds added several birds to the list including Black-necked Aracari, Green Oropendola, Pied Lapwing (= Plover), Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns, and Chestnut-bellied Seedeater among many others. At 5 pm, we boarded our boats and went down the waters of the mighty Essequibo River to see Black-collared Swallows and had superb views of Ladder-tailed Nightjars.

## Nov 05

Today we had an early breakfast and left again down the waters of the Essequibo to the field station at the base of Turtle Mountain. On the way we got Bat Falcon, Guianan (Amazonian White-tailed) Trogon and Drab Water-Tyrants. We started to walk the trail toward the station when a huge ant swarm appeared containing only a few Black-chinned Antbirds, a male White-flanked Antwren, a couple of Plain-brown Woodcreepers, one Amazonian Barred and one Striped Woodcreeper and a couple of Wedge-billed Woodcreepers. We then continued to an open gap where we were entertained by closer scope views of Dusky Purpletuft, an amazing Spangled Cotinga, Golden-sided Euphonia, and some Blue-headed Parrots. The trail to the top of Turtle Mountain was not easy, but rewarded us with superb views of Yellow-billed Jacamar, and Ferruginous-backed Antbird. We enjoyed some nice snacks and cold lemonade that the guys from the lodge were carrying for us. We heard some Red-and-black Grosbeaks that never came to the tape, and finally got to the top (not without flushing a gang of Grey-winged Trumpeters that we unfortunately could not see).



What an AMAZING view up there of infinite forest cover crossed by the meandering Essequibo with large table top hills all in the background. Shortly after our arrival, an **Orange-breasted Falcon** came into view flying in circles first and then perching just above our heads. We then descended the hill and further down got scope views of a Dusky Parrot while a Pygmy Antwren jumped around.

We boarded the boats to go to lodge looking for a well-deserved lunch and found a Black Caracara waiting for us at the dock. Walking the lodge entrance road in the afternoon, we scored Great Jacamar and Brown-bellied Antwren before getting Short-tailed Nighthawk and Common Potoo as night fell.

## Nov 06

It was still dark and we already had coffee and just after the daybreak we were birding a short trail from the lodge to witness one of the most amazing bird shows ever! Just under the canopy, a tree branch held Capuchinbirds that were calling and displaying. What a treat seeing these weirdoes displaying in the canopy boosting their throat sacs and vocalizing like cows. Meanwhile, a Rufous-capped Antthrush was very active around but never allowed any views and troops of Red-faced Black Spider Monkeys were crazy everywhere. I called in a Chestnut-rumped Woodcreeper and it was indeed a lifer for most of the group. We returned for breakfast at the lodge where everyone could catch up with the Painted Parakeets that had been hanging around.

After breakfast, we boarded our three 4x4s and headed along the entrance road. Not far from our starting point, a couple of Waved Woodpeckers that performed beautifully for us. Guianan Red Cotingas were heard and we taped them in but unfortunately they only allowed a few of the group to see them. They are big and colorful, but not easy to see in the sub canopy.

We then continued driving south and Ron spotted a splendid group of Grey-winged Trumpeters crossing the road. All of the vehicles came along and we enjoyed these beasts walking along the road, trying to catch some food from low bushes, and running across the road with their lowered heads in front... a sight to be never forgotten! While these trumpeters were entertaining us, a couple of Black Curassows decided to slowly cross the road just in front of us allowing binocular and scope views.

We continued to look for some white-sand Moriche scrub species where we had no success trying to locate Bronzy Jacamar, but got point blank views of the Guianan/Olive Schiffornis, one of the recent copious splits of the former Thrush-like Schiffornis *sensu lato*. We eventually had good views of a male Black Manakin and Common Scale-backed Antbird and a White-crowned Manakin showed up. After this stop, Marissa and the drivers surprised us with snacks and cold drinks, plus cold refreshing towels (of course, flamboyant orange color in honor of the *Rupicola*, the genus of the Cock-of-the-rock and their company alternative name!).

We finally reached Surama Ecolodge own and run by the Macushi community at Surama Village where Yellow-rumped Caciques had a huge nesting colony. After lunch and a bit of rest and refreshing showers, we hiked a bit in the open savanna and towards the Burro Burro River finding Roadside Hawk, Lesser Elaenia, Guianan Puffbird, Yellow-throated Woodpecker, and an Ocellated Crake calling that we could not find. We tried some owling without much success and a full moon came soon, so with some distant calling by a Great Potoo we returned to the lodge for dinner, list, and a much deserved rest.

### **Nov 07**

We started today trying to find Ocellated Crake in the pastures just there near the lodge at Surama. Even though we heard it close by and searched the pastures around, we could not flush the now renamed *Ocellated Chigger*. We then moved to the main road and stopped at a big opening to add Purple-breasted Cotinga, Green Aracari, and Ringed Woodpecker among others. We got our truck convoy moving and our first stop offered my most wanted Guiana shield birds - three Blue-backed Tanagers with scope views! We then started our Harpy Eagle quest going into a forest trail where we actually had great luck finding a roosting Long-tailed Potoo and a couple of Rufous-bellied Antwrens. We arrived at the eagle nest tree and in just 10 minutes of arriving, we saw the young Harpy flying to another tree and got superb views of this massive raptor.

The young Harpy was already 1.5 years old so not a boring chick anymore but is flying here and there, looking everywhere, checking at us in the ground, etc. Mesmerized by the Harpy, we didn't pay attention to the Crimson Fruitcrow that was also in the tree. Soon after the Harpy moment, a substantial mixed flock moved through the canopy containing Pink-throated Becard, Lemon-chested Greenlet, Todd's Antwren, Cinnamon-rumped Foliage-Gleaner, Blackpoll Warbler, Ash-winged Antwren, Zimmer's Flatbill, Guira Tanager, Spotted Tanagers, Yellow-throated Woodpecker, Flame-crested Tanager, and more. The flock was huge! As we left the area to go and look for lunch, we found a mob of Cinereous and Dusky-throated Antshrikes and finally caught up with Rufous-capped Antthrush. A good bonus was a White-plumed Antbird showing really well in response to my tape at a place where some army ants were moving around but not really swarming.

Suddenly Ron jumped back almost landing on me and he was saying "*giant anteata giant anteata*". In front of us, less than three meters away, was this huge-tailed Giant Anteater in the trail where it'd been resting for the last hours since we passed by. Everyone saw it very well and intriguingly it just disappeared in the forest after a few meters of walking. After lunch, we returned to the big open area to try again for Crimson Fruitcrow but nothing today; instead, we found LOADS of Spangled Cotingas, Paradise Jacamar, Yellow-throated Flycatcher, and a brilliant Cinnamon-throated Woodcreeper. At night, Crested Owl, Tropical Screech-Owl, and Pauraque were all heard from the lodge under a bright moon with the silhouette of the lodge on one side and the stout Pakaraima Mountains on the other.

### **Nov 08**

WHAT A MORNING! Today we left and again first thing early morning trying for the Ocellated Chigger only to hear it in the distance. We patrolled the pasture to no avail and then continued toward the Burro Burro River trail. We scanned a lot around a tree

where several Red-and-green Macaws were perched and suddenly something scared them and they noisily flew away. We were in hopes of perhaps a Harpy Eagle around. A big troop of Cayenne Jays entertained us a bit, but in general the trail was not very active and Ron had us marching the last kilometer to reach the bridge area. We got to the first bridge area and Ron said we were on a good area for THE bird, so I played back the “uUOoo... uUOoo” a couple of times and in less than 10 seconds we were hearing distant bill snapping sounds. Ron and I were very excited and most of the group still was a bit confused, as they could not grab the noises. We played another bit and this *Neomorphus* started to bill snap more and more getting closer indeed, now everyone was sure what was going on and adrenalin rushed! We did try slowly to locate the source of the noise during some 30 minutes without success; I moved even further back in the forest so the playback source was deeper in the forest but this bird did not want to move away from an area with dense tangles and fallen branches. At this point some of our clients were losing interest and even walked away a bit around entertaining themselves looking at plants and other forest creatures around but we were determined to work out our life bird of the year! While trying some playback, Brooke got a glimpse of the bird moving on a log merely 50 cm from the ground so excitement rushed. I showed up again from my distant position and they were all clustered together meticulously scanning this patch of branches and thick vegetation. I moved the playback back a bit again (the advantage of having a Bluetooth speaker nowadays!) and this made the bird to move more so Graham got a very decent view of it while descended from a branch to the ground before disappearing again.

At this point, I was happy that two of my clients had seen the bird, but I was starting to get a bit nervous thinking that I had yet other 7 clients wanting to see the beast and I had had not had a single glimpse so far. We just moved some meters along the trail, and unexpectedly, this roadrunner-like shape crossed the path running like crazy offering a glimpse to everyone on the group but not to me (oouuuchhh!). At that point my soul got the punch of “*they got a glimpse already, if the bird does not cooperate, they will be relatively pleased and Diego is going to be screwed!*” Nonetheless, I softly pressed the play button again for a couple of bouts and got the monster moving in the background not far from us. And then, one of those situations where you are not sure if it is real or you are dreaming happened, this huge *correcaminos* approached us slowly, allowing for better views to everyone every time it moved, until it perched in the open, basically three meters away from all of us showing its devil-like bright red facial skin, black and yellow massive bill, a very dark black breast, elongated tail, and the diagnostic chestnut rufous wings. I was in shock, my arms got goose bumps, and this bird decided then to slowly walk across the trail where we were all standing offering the best views ever possible for everyone in the group! We were all adrenaline-charged and happy because we have just seen one of the most secretive birds you can try in the Neotropical jungles, a Ground Cuckoo, our Rufous-winged Ground Cuckoo and the best views ever!

We returned to lodge adding Pectoral Sparrow, Eastern Slaty Antshrike, and White-browed Antbird among others to the list. We packed and left this superb place to go to another: Atta Lodge, where we had a nice lunch and got Yellow-tufted Woodpecker, Caica Parrot, Guianan Tyrannulet, and Spix’s Guan in the lodge grounds by noon time. We then went to the canopy walkway where we had great views of Black-tailed Tityra, Black-faced and Blue Dacnis, Green and Purple Honeycreepers, and a group of 7

Dusky Purpletufts noisily chasing each other. We also finally got to see Channel-billed Toucan in the distance and a pair of Waved Woodpeckers came really close while Thrush-like Antpitta sang in the ground. We waited until dark to try for the White-winged Potoo that unfortunately we all only got to hear this time (But Duncan and John our local guide got a glimpse of).

### Nov 09

This morning after a quick coffee we walked down the Atta Lodge entrance road where in addition to a neat group of Grey-winged Trumpeters, we got followed a Lined Forest Falcon for quite a while but unfortunately not getting any views of this secretive raptor. We hit the main highway and John our local guide got us onto a **Blackish Nightjar** very quickly. Pied Puffbird was also scoped from the opening in the main road. Red-and-green Macaws were flying overhead and squawking loudly. After some 800 meters we reached a bridge where I was able to seduce a lovely couple of Guianan Streaked Antwrens to come out of the foliage for views. A female Fork-tailed Woodnymph was perched there in the open while and White-necked Jacobins chased each other near the bridge. We had had some groups of Band-rumped Swifts over the bridge, but suddenly I noticed a chunkier different shaped one with them. Those of us still there followed it with bins and noted that we were having the pleasure of seeing White-chinned Swift.



A few from the crew were picked up by Darwin in one of the cars to return to the lodge, but most of us took a shortcut through the forest that offered us a nice understory flock containing Grey Antwrens, Brown-bellied Antwren, Black-spotted Barbet, Dusky-throated Antshrike, White-flanked Antwren and others. Just some meters further, we bumped into another flock this time some army ants followers namely White-plumed and Rufous-throated Antbirds and several Grey-winged Trumpeters. We spent more and more time patrolling for the Crimson Fruitcrow in vain and went back for lunch.



Later on in the afternoon we took a walk under the canopy walkway area where we nailed down an amazingly good looking Guianan Red Cotinga! A few meters after, a big canopy flock entertained us and we finally got closer high quality views of Yellow-backed Tanager and a stunner **Black-faced Hawk** perched just 5 meters above us with a Giant Ameva Lizard on its claws. With more patrolling in our quest for the Fruitcrow, we got nice views of Caica Parrot, Golden-winged Parakeet, Paradise Jacamar, Red-necked Woodpecker, Green and Black-necked Aracaris and more. We went again to the Canopy Walkway where we studied the differences between Todd's and Spot-backed Antwrens at eye level and also got cracking point blank views of Tiny Tyrant Manakin. This time, the nocturnal bird gods allowed

us to have premier looks of a White-winged Potoo when it came to check Ron's whistled calls. As if this was not enough, we drove 5 minutes from the lodge to get Black-banded Owls and the biggest brightest shooting star any of us had ever seen.

### **Nov 10**

Today we decided to go back to the main road and head the other way a few kilometers to try again for the Bronzy Jacamar we had missed previously. We had no had luck with the Jacamar but instead we were all well rewarded when I spotted a male Fiery-tailed Aowlbill feeding on some tiny roadside flowers and called it in enthusiastically! We also got Blue-tailed Emerald and Crimson Topaz all quite close to the road near some flowering trees. Black Manakin was also seen again and we heard Red-legged Tinamou in the distance.

We returned to lodge to scan more for the Crimson Fruitcrow but nothing appeared so we decided to walk one of the trails finding again army ants with plenty of White-plumed and Rufous-throated Antbirds. A Guianan Toucanet and a Black-spotted Barbet were calling above our heads in the canopy but we could not find them, so we hit the road and playing them back from there we got splendid views of a couple of barbets. Later on, Green-backed and Collared Trogons appeared and we resumed our Fruitcrow patrol.

After lunch and finally without any luck with the Fruitcrow, we left the lodge towards our next destination, leaving behind the real forest and getting into a variety of savanna habitats. From the road, we got loads of birds including Maguari Stork, Black-collared and Savanna Hawks, Crested and Yellow-headed Caracaras, a couple of Aplomado Falcon being mobbed by Fork-tailed Flycatchers, White-faced Whistling Ducks, and Burrowing Owl among others. We got to our next community ecolodge in the Yupakari Village after dark, where they offered us a superb dinner.

### **Nov 11**

We got a fabulous early breakfast and left towards the savanna to try for our first target. Our local guides started to traverse an area of open grassland savanna while we were seeing Grassland Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Vermillion Flycatcher, American Kestrel, and hearing again Ocellated Crake in the distance. Soon, they were calling us to catch up as they had found a Bearded Tachuri. We got there and located the bird for everyone easily, even allowing scope views of this hard to find, range restricted little bird.

We then moved to another area to try for our other target of the day. This place was a marshy one and we basically followed the same strategy with the difference that now another local guide had joined us and we had three guys in front trying to locate the Crested Doradito. Soon our efficient local guides were calling us to come closer, and again, here we were just face to face with this tiny rare open country flycatcher. It was not even 8:00 AM and we had our two rare targets in the bag! We scanned the marshes and surrounding vegetation, finding Yellow Oriole, Bicolored Wrens, White-tailed Nightjar, Plumbeous Seedeater, Wattled Jacana, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, and as a superb bonus, a Giant Anteater just walked among us totally ignoring our presence.

We got back to the lodge, had a delicious lunch and a rest waiting for the afternoon to cool down a bit. We then moved toward the Rupununi River finding Blue-backed Manakin and Spotted Puffbird along the way, as well as a Zone-tailed Hawk. We boarded our little vessels and nailed down Green, Ringed, and Amazon Kingfishers, plus Greater Ani and Lesser Kiskadee before reaching the lake. Once there, we walked the shore finding Purple Gallinules and Wattled Jacanas along with a Little Blue Heron. Dusk came and the air above the lake was filled with Lesser, Least, and Band-tailed Nighthawks. Returning on our boats after dark, we spotted Black and Spectacled Caimans, Common Opossum, Capped and Boat-billed Herons, Amazonian Tree Boa and noted a Tropical Screech Owl that was only heard.

## Nov 12

We left the lodge early after breakfast driving straight towards Karasabi for our first try for Sun Parakeet. We did a couple of short stops on swampy areas getting the regular things plus a nice flock of Muscovy Ducks flying by and a distant Azure Gallinule in terrible light. We reached Karasabi, picked up our local guides, and drove toward the Pakaraima Mountains again. Once we got there, we walked a little bit on a trail and while we were scanning our drivers called us via radio saying we had to walk back to the main road and they will be picking us up because they had a group of some 10-15 parakeets on another area they were checking. When we finally got there, the birds of course were not in the same trees where they had spotted them earlier, so we walked along the road a short distance to abruptly find us face to face with this shiny colorful yellow/green/orange feathered creatures perched merely 10 meters away from us and just three meters above the ground in a bush. This was part of a small group of five **Sun Parakeets** that we enjoyed for a while point blank views; then, these parakeets flew over the road but a bigger group of 10 individuals descended from the rocky top of the mountain and also landed nearby. Everyone in the group enjoyed scope views, studied them with binoculars, and those geared took some nice photographs! We then returned very happy to Karasabi where we had lunch before continuing our long drive towards Lethem in the Brazilian border. Along the road we stopped for Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Orange-backed Troupial, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, and Pale-tipped Inezia, among others before reaching Manari Ranch near Lethem and the Brazilian border where we would spend the next four nights.



### Nov 13

After a 5:00 am hearty breakfast we traveled and what normally is a 2 - 3 hour drive in one hour due to the dry conditions of the terrain inside the Manari Ranch to reach the Irang River area near the Brazil border. Our first stop was at a special place that Jeremy, our local guide and host at the ranch, had discovered for the rare and range restricted Rio Branco Antbird. We got to the place and indeed, a Rio Branco Antbird was singing inside the tangled vegetation (and Red-bellied Macaws were perched above the place). We got under the bushes and called the bird only once and a stunning male came straight to us and kept moving only two meters away from us going in circles around the group so everyone got supreme views; a female was duet calling with this male, but never came into view.

We then moved to our next patch of gallery forest to find that a hive of African Bees was in our way so we had to find an alternate place. We moved along the edge of the gallery forest, seeing Hooded Tanagers and finally got into a nice patch of tangles and played the tape of the Hoary-throated Spinetail. After one minute or so, a Spinetail came silently and moved around the group offering smashing views. We also got Common Tody-Flycatcher at this place and Flavescent Warbler, Straight-billed and Streak-headed Woodcreepers, Pale-tipped Inezia, and Orange-backed Troupial at another little trail we tried near the river just seeing Brazilian savannahs in the other side.

We then returned to our lodge for a nice lunch and rest until later on the afternoon, when we walked the ranch entrance road nailing down Aplomado Falcons and Red-bellied Macaws. For those who decided to wait it out, we got our main night target that night: Nacunda Nighthawk. We returned to the lodge, got an early quick dinner and swiftly did the list so everyone went to bed because we had a supremely early start the next day.

### Nov 14

Our very early start meant that at 2:45 am, I was passing by all rooms checking that everyone was up already for coffee as we were leaving 3:00 am. We then drove around 2.5 hours to the Dadanawa Ranch, had breakfast and more coffee and drove another 2 hours inside the ranch toward a rocky outcrop with some vegetation. Our plan was to get there, sit next to a water seep in the rock, and wait as long as it took until our target bird showed up. But the commitment of our early rising crew was rewarded quickly as we arrived at the site. Asaph, our local guide, raised his arm to show us a family of our target species perched in a dead bush just in front of all of us. Indeed ladies and gentleman, not even 8:00 am and we were all enjoying superb views of the rare and endangered **Red Siskin!** A male and a couple of young individuals were perched preening, so they offered a real show for some 10-15 minutes before flying away. We were all in high spirits and really pleased that we decided to leave earlier than we had scheduled this morning. We then waited almost for an hour to see if they returned to drink again, but they never showed up so we left the place more than cheerfully then.



On the way out, we finally nailed down Amazonian

Scrub Flycatcher and got to study the Plain-crested Elaenias. We drove through the savanna around a huge rocky outcrop and got to a place where we glimpsed Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant and got some Finch's Euphonias. I even got a life bird for Ron when Asaph heard Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin calls inside the scrub. I went and recorded it and we got it out for quick views. This is possibly the first record in this slope of the Kanuku Mountains as per Asaph's comments.

We returned to the ranch for lunch and enjoyed the local Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle displaying high in the sky. After a very tasty lunch and some coffee and rest, we walked around the ranch grounds where we added Golden-spangled Piculet and Ashy-headed Greenlet to our trip list. We happily returned to our base camp at Manari Ranch where we enjoyed another superb dinner and went exhausted but fulfilled to bed.

### **Nov 15**

So today was our bonus "free" day and we got breakfast at 5 am and by 5:30 am we were driving towards the Kanuku Mountains to explore a trail on a more humid area than the sites we had been birding around the last few days. Kanuku means "forest" in Wapishana tongue that is the one from the indigenous communities of this side of the country. We passed the Moco-Moco Village and went into a trail that offered nice views of White-bellied and Dusky Antbirds as well as Ochre-bellied Flycatcher and extremely good close views of Blue-backed Manakin. A Black-banded Woodcreeper showed well while preying on a grasshopper. We got to an open area, where we scanned for White Bellbirds perched in the tree tops but they had not been calling this time of the year so basically not easy –almost impossible- to see.

Nevertheless, a King Vulture was perched and offered superb views on the scope. Then three more individuals were seen cruising not very high up in the sky. We relaxed a bit on a very nice and fresh swimming hole that was made by a small crystal-clear creek and later returned to the lodge for lunch. During lunchtime some of us joined Ron, Marissa and Darwin and went to Bonfim, the Brazilian city in the other side of the Takutu River, to buy beer and ice-cream. Birds along the way included Little Blue Heron, Great Egret, Rock Pigeon, and Crested and Yellow-headed Caracaras for our Brazilian lists.

In the afternoon, we drove some 30 minutes north to a place where Jeremy had heard Point-tailed Palmcreeper in the past. We got to this huge palm plot and tried around without success. Nonetheless, we got a load of birds in the area including Lined Seedeater, Neotropical Palm Swifts, Orange-backed Troupial perched in the open, and a very cooperative White-headed Marsh-Tyrant. While driving back home in the dark, a Burrowing Owl was seen perched in the middle of the road. Just before parking at Manari Ranch, we drove a close airstrip where we got some Nacunda Nighthawks flying by low into the car's headlights.

### **Nov 16**

This morning some of us took a quick walk around the Ranch before breakfast enjoying a low-flying group of Buff-necked Ibis, a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl calling, a Pearl Kite being mobbed by hummers, and a lovely Orange-backed Troupial in the open. We then went to Lethem airport to take our flight back to Georgetown where we landed safe and

sound and went straight to our hotel for lunch and some much deserved rest in the afternoon.

Instead resting, some of the group went to the Botanical Gardens joining me and Bob that had missed birding this place at the beginning of the trip due to delays with his flights coming from US to Guyana. He had then missed the White-bellied Piculet and the Blood-colored Woodpecker, so we had a couple of targets to find for him in the afternoon. We hit the Gardens and got the classic Red-shouldered Macaws and Brown-breasted Parakeets, as well as the myriad of flycatchers and some tanagers including a lovely couple of Violaceous Euphonias. I thought I heard the Piculet calling far away and we moved in that direction but nothing came to the tape. We stayed around seeing Pale-bellied Thrush and trying to see some Mouse-colored Tyrannulets, when suddenly on one of my playback trawls drew in three Piculets that came straight into the tree branches above our heads offering superb views!

We then moved to the main long straight road and no further than 100 meters I spotted a Blood-colored Woodpecker foraging at eye level on dry twigs of a dead bush some 40 meters away. We still wanted to walk a bit more on the road but a noise coming very loud, but softly, from inside a huge Ceiba tree (= kapok) got our attention. We were unable to find the source of the noise but then Bob found a Great Horned Owl perched in the open in another tree just in front of the Ceiba and we were sure that a second individual was making the sound in a hole inside the big tree! We enjoyed prolonged scope views of the individual in the open and also tried to locate the other individual inside the tree but could not do it. Suddenly another huge owl flew out from the tree and perched, our first owl came and they copulated for a second before the female flew to another tree further away. What a great way to finish this Sunrise Birding trip to Guyana, with a non-planned afternoon expedition catching up with the two woodpeckers we needed for one of our clients, and seeing these huge beast owls on their more cozy moments of the day!



This was a superb trip! We got to record 422 species from which only 29 were only heard, and most important, as in all Sunrise Birding trips: getting most of the people in the group to see all birds we found and have quality views was our priority. We visited a good variety of habitats in this amazing country, and indeed, we got to enjoy Guyanese people cordiality and warmth at its maximum. I have to thank Ron Allicock for his great field and logistical skills and for showing me some new birds in this trip; Marissa Allicock, Ron's lovely wife, made our trip smoother providing drinks, snacks, spotting some good birds and making logistics smooth. Thanks to all our main drivers (Darwin, Mikey, Ricardo) and all the other local guides and local drivers that made this a wonderful experience. I have also to thank all our clients that helped with the birding spotting birds here and there, and questioning our identifications in the field making us learn more and more about tricky species; special thanks to Graham Tebb for bringing his scope and allowing everyone to use it and also for sharing his extensive knowledge on Neotropical birds on this trip. I was really pleased to see how ecotourism in this country is growing in a good direction; several of the places where we stayed were operated or even owned by the local communities bringing a real working option for locals and ensuring that habitat and nature is conserved.

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