

Sunrise Birding LLC
GUYANA
 November 2015
TRIP REPORT
 by Diego Calderon



Report and Photos by Diego Calderon and Leon Moore where noted.



Sunrise Birding LLC

www.sunrisebirding.com

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Leaders: Leon Moore & Diego Calderon

Birds of the trip voted by clients and guides:

Sun Parakeet was our smashing winner this year (*I guess the superb unexpected swim we took after finding them in the heat of the day helped*), followed by Red Siskin and a tie between Red-and-green Macaws nesting in a tree hole and Black-faced Hawk perched few meters away from us while in the canopy walkway. Potoos also qualified this year in the top-ten were White-winged and Long-tailed, both quite rare species, mentioned by our clients. Hoatzin, Burrowing Owl, Crimson Topaz, Crested Doradito, and Green-and-rufous Kingfisher were also picked this year.

November 01

Everyone got here either yesterday or today after good flights, no delays, and smooth trips in general... Deb and Matthew even went on a nocturnal birding outing in Trinidad taking advantage of their long 8 hours stopover, and I finally made it in one piece -and with luggage!- safe and sound after a non-stop 72 hours loong trip from Madagascar after being stranded in Masoala for days (but that's part of another trip).

We got together for breakfast, some went with Leon our local guide for some shopping and sightseeing around Georgetown and in the afternoon some of us went on a relaxed pre-trip stroll to the Botanical Gardens that gave us a nice introduction to several of the birds to come with some good "green noisy" ones: Blue-and-yellow and Red-shouldered Macaws, and loads of Orange-winged plus a few Mealy Amazons. Also, the tyrant flycatcher family was copious and were represented by Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Pied Water Tyrant, Rusty-margined and Boat-billed Flycatchers, Great and Lesser Kiskadees, and Tropical and Grey Kingbirds. Zone-tailed Hawk gave us chance to study it well and compare with vultures, and Toco Toucan surprised us with amazing views.

Unarguably, the bird of the day –and probably of the trip for some already–was an amazing **Orange-breasted Falcon** that we found while munching on a passerine and basically was recorded for the very first time in the Botanical Gardens the day before only.



November 02

We were having coffee and tea before 4:30 am and drove east early in the main road that takes you to Suriname but detouring towards the Mahaica River area where our boat driver Narish was already waiting for us. Wing-barred Seedeaters and Blue-black Grassquits were all over the place and both Black-crested and Barred Antshrikes offered great views while we used the washrooms at his family before starting our boat trip. Once in the boat, Hoatzins were common offering great views as the official Guyana bird. Spotted Tody-Flycatchers came into view with their diabolic red eyes, and an Ashy-headed Greenlet responded to tape and perched, without moving for

almost a minute!, granting us great views. We played a bit with some Silvered Antbirds that even glimpsed left much to be seen actually; the Little Cuckoo on the other hand, made a couple of nice appearances. We got Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, as well as Green-tailed Jacamar and started to go back for breakfast.



After some minutes in the cars, we hit the Avary Road where our **Rufous Crab Hawk** was the very first bird we saw perched almost eye-level behind some mangrove curtains; we then roved to the road to get us two more main targets in the form of a small woodpecker (with the diminutive White-bellied Piculet) and a bigger one: Blood-colored Woodpecker. We also got great views of Turquoise Tanagers, Bicolored Conebill and Striped Cuckoo. Returning to Georgetown we stop at the mudflats to collect the splendid Scarlet Ibis along with a bunch of other waterbirds, namely Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Western Cattle,



Snowy and Great Egrets, Striated, Cocoi, Tricolored and Little Blue Herons, Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Whimbrel, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plover, Black Skimmer, and Gull-billed Tern among others. We did a bit of resting after lunch and went to the botanical gardens finding again Blood-colored Woodpecker, and this time Great Horned Owl, Black-necked Aracari, Yellow-crowned Amazon/Parrot and what was the first Plain-crowned Spinetail for our guide Leon at the gardens.

November 03

Today, we had a relaxed start as our charter flight to Fairview village (with a 3 hours stopover at Kaieteur Falls) required us to leave hotel by 8:00 am. We got to Ogle airport to find that our flight was going to be late, and indeed we weren't in the air almost until noon! We landed in Kaieteur and our very first bird was a Rufous-crowned Elaenia that came to scrutinize my tape. I was amazed to see that everything was very dry, crunchy brown leaves everywhere in the ground, and trees

evidently dehydrated after more than 3 months of no rains in the area. We went into the corner where we see Cock-of-the-rock and a female flew by a couple of times, but no orangey fire males around this time and our hopes were delayed for a few days until we could visit a lek of this species. Leon and I also trawled for Roraiman Antbird to no avail due the dryness of the area and the time of the day for sure. We got Purple Honeycreepers around and did the circuit on the different viewpoints for the falls enjoying these amazing huge cataracts from every possible angle. We left the falls, flew for almost 30 minutes and landed near Iwokrama



River Lodge where we were transferred and welcomed by the staff. With still an hour of light the gardens produced Moriche (Epaulet) Orioles, Painted Parakeets, Chestnut-bellied Seed eaters, and Short-tailed Nighthawks, Ladder-tailed Nightjars and Pauraque as dusk came by. Even we had seen the great Ladder-taileds, we went on a boat trip finding a couple of Amazonian Tree Boas, Gladiator Tree Frogs, and both of Greater and Lesser Fishing (AKA Bulldog) Bats. Deb and Matt went on a short night walk on the entrance road finding a cute type of Mouse Opossum.

November 4

Break of the dawn was just before 5:30 am and we already having breakfast to be boarding our boats to Turtle Mountain area by 6:00 am. On the way we saw White-throated and Channel-billed Toucans, plenty of Bat Falcons, Black-collared Swallows in the river rocks, and a couple of Pied Plovers / Lapwings in the sandbars along with some Muscovy Ducks. **Black Caimans** were also around. We also stopped at a fruiting tree along the river where Green-backed and Guianan Trogons where foraging joined by Red-eye (Chivi) Vireo and Squirrel Cuckoo. Guianan Streaked Antwrens were also there and we got perfect views, plus a quick glimpse of Black-chinned Antbird. We got the beginning of the trail and had a small flock lead by Cinereous and Dusky-throated Antshrikes traveling with Buff-throated and Chestnut-rumped Woodcreepers; Screaming Piha was also enjoyed by everyone in the scope! We then got to the clearing of the research camp where Dusky Purpletufts and Guianan Toucanets we got in the scope. As only some people were eager for the climb up to Turtle Mountain we split the group in 2 here. We went ahead but relaxed because our main target in the summit of the mountain was already in the bag when we saw Orange-breasted Falcon in the Botanical Gardens. We enjoyed huge flocks with Brown-bellied, White-flanked and Grey Antwrens, Fasciated Antshrike, Olivaceous



Flatbill, Amazonian Royal Flycatcher, among many others. We were just going to start climbing a bit on the trail, when I heard this “wooooo” in the distance and look at Leon and we both said at the same time “Ground Cuckoo!!!” We returned a bit in the trail, positioned ourselves and played back; the bird didn’t respond for several minutes and when it did, it was obvious that it had just walked in front of our noses crossing the trail. We played a bit more with it but no interest was shown so we had to leave the area. We returned for a late lunch and in the afternoon spent some time enjoy some more general birding in the gardens (Lineated Woodpecker, Black Caracara, Golden-winged Parakeet, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Epaulet/Moriche Oriole, etc). At night, we did a bit of owling finding a superb **Tawny-bellied Screech-Owl**.



November 5

This morning we went early to the Capuchinbird lek area and found these amazing beasts (AKA as the “calf bird”) displaying in the canopy; we enjoyed the show for a while and took advantage to playback a couple of distant Spotted and Thrush-like Antpittas with no response. We came back for breakfast, seeing a troop of **Red-faced Black Spider Monkeys**

(Photo: Leon Moore) and left Iwokrama Lodge towards Lodge. In the way we stopped a couple of times finding a great responsive male of the stunning Guianan Red Cotinga as well as Green Aracaris, and a White-chinned Sapphire that took quite some time to locate.

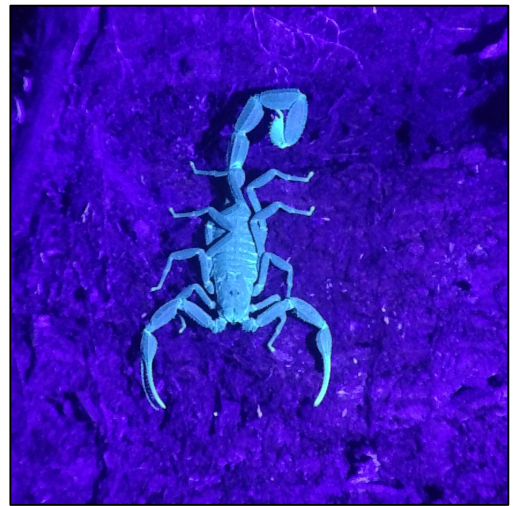


Further in the road, we birded the white sand Moriche palm scrub enjoying great views of Black Manakin (along with White-crowned and Golden-headed) and Guianan Schiffornis. Another stop at another white sand patch that I discovered last year with Atta local guide John delivered Bronzy Jacamar and we tried to locate a White Bellbird that could be heard in the background canopy persistently calling. A huge Jabir entertained us with sharp photo opportunities just before getting for lunch at Atta Lodge. We accommodate on our great rooms (with open roof showers so you can actually do some birding even showering!) and in the afternoon went for a walk having Guianan Puffbird just before the Canopy Walkway. It was rather quiet up there in the walkway (although we got superb views of Tiny Tyrant-Manakin) and no night birds responded, so we went to visit another place in the main road only few

minutes from lodge nailing down Black-banded Owl and a great White-winged Potoo at the lodge entrance, plus having loads of fun using Deb's black UV light to find **scorpions** around!

November 6

Today we started with one of those shows that stay forever in your birding mind: a huge army ants swarm, in the open entrance road, and for quite a few hours. We positioned ourselves; stools were deployed, and load of fun overflowed. We could study in detail several individuals of White-plumed and Rufous-throated Antbirds as they foraged low close to ground for flushed insects. Not so numerous, but more challenging and rewarding to see, were one Common Scale-backed Antbird, and a couple of Black-throated Antshrikes. The swarm also had plenty of Woodcreepers including Black-banded, Amazonian Barred, and Plain-brown. It was hot and activity got very slow; an Amazonian Pygmy-Owl kept us busy for a while and we could not find it, but when we hit the road a soaring Ornate Hawk-Eagle was a good prize. Black Curassows visited the kitchen leftovers several times during the day allowing for great views. Later on, a flock of antwrens entertained us allowing close study of Brown-bellied and Rufous-bellied, as well as White-flanked, Grey, and Ash-winged Antwrens (Guianan Streaked we had seen earlier in the bridge in the main road); additionally, Guianan Warbling Antbird and both Mouse-colored and Dusky-throated Antshrikes were mixed with the flock. We also went for a stroll finding the much wanted Red-fan Parrots in the main road near the lodge.



November 7

Today we went up early morning to the canopy walkway enjoying point blank views of Black-faced Hawk perched few meters away for several minutes and some Black-spotted Barbets around also. We left the lodge, and roadside birding produced amazing views of a couple of **Blackish Nightjars**, Crimson Topaz, a couple of Red-and-green Macaws, and the secretive Green-and-rufous Kingfisher besides Green, Amazon, and Ringed we also saw that same day. We were "lucky" to spot an Ocelot while visiting the Guianan Cock-of-the-rock lek but had not a single bird around; actually, our ocelot luck proved to be not so much luck after all... it seemed the cat scared the birds away! We spent maybe a couple of hours there without finding a single bird and then headed to Surama Lodge for lunch enjoying Long-tailed Potoo on the way. In the afternoon we got a Common Potoo chick near the lodge so we decided to try an area where Great Potoo had been seen the day before but we couldn't find it. We had loads of Least Nighthawks before dusk and after dinner some of us went owling enjoying great views of Kinkajou and Tropical Screech Owl.



November 8

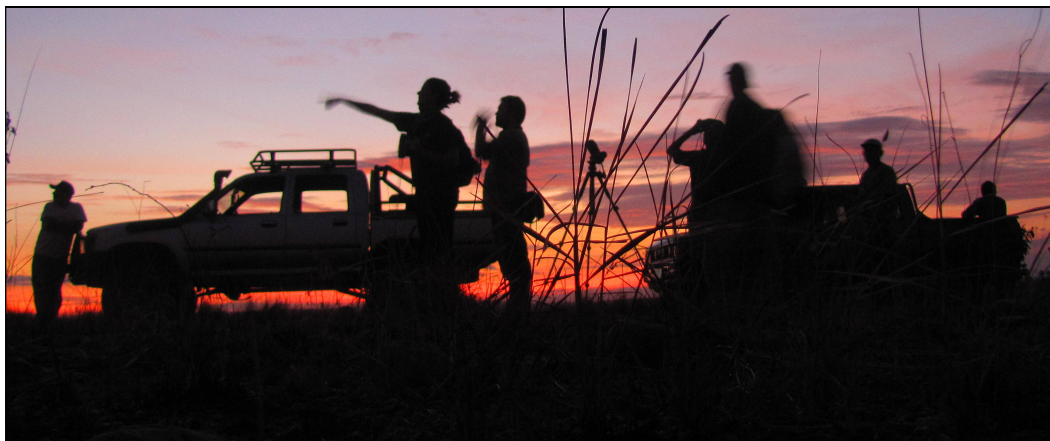
This morning while leaving Surama still dark, we got another Ocelot in the road that we could just follow on foot and enjoy for almost a couple of minutes! We got to the section of the road where you start walking towards the Harpy Eagle nesting area; in the way, we got great views of Rufous-capped Antthrush. We got to the Harpy nest and got in position and waited... and waited, and waited, and waited. After a whole morning, some people left to the lodge for lunch and rest, and some birding around in the afternoon; but some decided to stay to give it a fair chance to the eagles to come. We stayed until midafternoon having no eagles at all but great views of Cream-colored Woodpecker, Black Nunbirds, Green Aracaris, and Ralph and I chased a Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo for maybe a couple of hours seeing not much but moving vegetation. We then decided to quickly move to Cock-of-the-rock lek, having packed lunch while driving there, and giving it another try... again, nothing and it seemed clearer that the ocelot we got there the evening before was behind all this.

November 9

Today was our last chance for Harpy Eagle so part of the group went and had no luck; anyways, they were relieved with glimpse views of a Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo in the trail and a male Crimson Fruitcrow in the road! For the ones that stayed with me in the lodge, we went for a walk and had Cayenne Jays and almost got to see an Ocellated Crake that came to the very edge of the vegetation near Surama. We then drove to Caiman House lodge in the village of Yupakari seeing great Long-winged Harrier, loads of Savanna Hawks, Jabirus and Maguari Storks. In the afternoon, after a delicious lunch, we went to the river nailing down a tree full of Finch's Euphonia and some Blue-backed Manakins in the riverine forest. Band-tailed Nighthawks were flying all over above the river, as well as dozens of Lesser Nighthawks.

November 10

This morning we went very early to look for Giant Anteater; we had sent a cowboy with a radio since 4 am to try to locate one for us. We drove for almost one hour in the flat savannah and got to the top of a small plateau hill and waited for sunrise to come just after break of dawn. Manuel one of our local guides found us one very far away, and just when we were going to start driving to get closer, another much closer individual was located. We enjoyed it with bins and scope and some of our clients went bushwacking to try to get closer... they basically, sent it straight to us that stayed in the cars in the top of the hill. Seeing this huge furry creature trotting by few meters away is quite an amazing experience.



After this unique experience, we moved to get our morning targets, namely Bearded Tachuri and Crested Doradito; the Doradito was quite straightforward once we started to search its habitat, but the Tachuri proved to be more difficult and made us visit a second location. At the end, we all got great views of this couple of rare diminutive open grassy savannah flycatchers. We also spend quite some time playing again with Ocellated Crake unsuccessfully. After lunch, we went on a boat trip, getting loads of fun with much commoner species but some goodies like Spotted Puffbird, Green Ibis, and the hard to see Buff-breasted Wren. It was almost dark, but a White-browed Antbird was a lifer for some, and we had the most obliging ever **Common Potoo** and Long-tailed Nighthawk while returning to lodge.



November 11

Today we left very early, as our target was some 3-4 hours driving from lodge near the town of Karasabi. In the way, we enjoyed several open area birds having to mention some Nacunda Nighthawks, a hunting Crab-eating Fox, several Double-striped Thick-knees, and the cute family of **Burrowing Owls** we got near the road. We reached Karasabi, picked up our local guide, and went to the nearby hills. We scanned the road where we got Sun Parakeets last year first but didn't even hear them, so we moved to the yuca/casaba farms where they also are normally around. We heard them in the distance and after some river crossing and a bit of hiking we were eventually having great views of some 5 birds very close by. We all enjoyed scope views and after that we all went to jump on a magnificent natural swimming pool on a nearby creek. After cooling off for a bit, we started our journey South towards Lethem doing a couple of stops where we got Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Brown-throated Parakeets, Black-crested Antshrike, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Pale-tipped Inezia and Ochre-lored Flatbill. Yellowish Pipits were all over the grassland as well as some Bicolored Wrens. We reached Manari Ranch and had a much-earned rest.



November 12

We, again, left early and did almost one hour of driving before reaching our target birds area... had picnic breakfast while enjoying the most obliging ever Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and great close views of Glittering-throated Emeralds. We then went into the thick scrub that borders the Irang River (Brazil border) to look for our two main rare rare targets here (both species barely make it to Guyana being primarily distributed in Brazil)... it took a while to get the whole group on the birds, but not having to move actually, from the very same spot, we nailed down a beautiful couple

of the rare Rio Branco Antbird and a few minutes later, a very cooperative **Hoary-throated Spinetail** just walked by in front of everyone in the forest floor. We kept birding in the vicinity of the Irang River and, even without visas for some of our clients, decided to swim across all the way to Brazil while a couple of Spinetails were giving a show nearby... such fun! - Red-bellied Macaws were all over the place in the Moriche palms, and while returning to lodge we enjoyed great views of Bearded Tachuri again. In the afternoon we did some birding in the ranch gardens and went for a great swim in the local crystal-clear water hole.



November 13

We started super early today and left the ranch in the dark to drive for 3 straight hours to Dadanawa Ranch, do a quick stop for coffee, and drive almost 3 more hours to our battle place! We birders do this to go and seat in a big rocky outcrop in the middle of a huge savanna to scan for a little red rare bird... and indeed, we were rewarded with amazing and repetitive views of **Red Siskin**, a very threatened (status Endangered by the IUCN) and rare little eye-catching passerine that was only known from Colombia and Venezuela, and that was found in Guyana recently jus back in 2000 (fortunately securing some populations not being affected by the pet cage bird phenomena). So as we got plenty of Red Siskins, and half of our crew, including our local guide, was not feeling great due to some food poisoning from the previous day, we return to the Dadanawa Ranch to rest in the hammocks and eat something before the long drive back to our base Manari Ranch that got us crossing the base of the amazing Kanuku Mountains.



November 14

Today we could invest some morning time for birding before our flight back to Georgetown... we went then to the Mocomoco village area in the Kanuku Mountains for some lush birding... we nailed down some raptors in the way including Pearl and Double-toothed Kites, and Savanna and Roadside Hawks. We did the little trail that takes you to an amazing swimming hole getting some hummers in the way in the form of Sooty-capped Hermit and 3 Emeralds: Blue-tailed, White-chested, and Glittering-throated. Blue-backed Manakin was, as usual giving a show at the typical stake out, and the trail and open areas were packed with some other Tyrannoidea as Yellow-crowned and Mouse-colored Tyrannulets, Forest Elaenia, Helmeted Pygmy Tyrant, Slaty-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Grey-crowned and Ochre-lored Flatbills, and the more common Tropical, and Rusty-margined and Fork-tailed Flycatchers. White Bellbird was heard in the distance. Swimming was superb and we even got our bins

wet to see close by a Green-backed Trogon. We all flew back later to Georgetown and enjoyed our last dinner together after a superb fun trip loaded with great birds and moments.

This was another superb trip to this amazing country. Have to thank all of our clients this year, and all the staff from lodges, local guides and drivers, our local great guide and local operators for providing such great service... see you again in a couple of years!

