



Sunrise Birding LLC
GUYANA
 October 30 – November 10, 2017
TRIP REPORT

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



Photos: Spotted Puffbird (DC), Blood-colored Woodpecker (LM), watching Hoatzins (DC)

Photos: DC=Diego Calderon, LM= Leon Moore

GUYANA TRIP REPORT

October 30 – November 10, 2017

Leaders: Leon Moore & Diego Calderon

Highlights and top sightings of the trip as voted by participants

This trip top10 is rather weird but I loved the way some mega birds (i.e. Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo or Red Siskin) did not score to the top because of the great views and experiences we had of some other fine beasts (i.e. Fiery-tailed Awlbill, Golden-headed Manakin).

1. **Rufous Potoo**: Going to look for a species only recently found by our local guides added the perfect adrenalin addition to our night!
2. **Sun Parakeet**: Hard, hard work (and hot!) that finally paid off.
3. **Harpy Eagle**: A beautiful –and lucky!- encounter we got with an oldish chick individual near its nesting area.
4. **Fiery-tailed Awlbill**: One of the exciting surprises at Atta Lodge.
5. **Golden-headed Manakin**: Great views of this cutie just above our heads.
6. **Guianan Cock-of-the-rock**: Always a great experience at the lek.
7. **Crimson Fruitcrow**: My third time was a charm and I could share it with my group 😊
8. **Pompadour Cotinga**: One of the coolest Guyanese specialties.
9. **Bearded Tachuri**: This little chap did not even allow us to have breakfast and then posed for amazing photos.
10. **Blue-backed Manakin**: What a show we got from these colorful crazy dancers!

Special mentions have to be done also for:

- the **White-winged Potoo** that in addition to offering us a great view in the road, came later to serenade our last candle-light dinner at Atta Lodge
- of course the **Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo** that even did not allow for views got our adrenalin flowing several time
- that **Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin** that we all thought was impossible to find in that crappy habitat after a long tiring day but eventually showed extremely well
- the **Lesser Nighthawk** that we got to examine up close and personal (“keep Leon indoors” please!)
- and of course the not-easy but super enjoyable and very rewarding trip we did for one of the rarest birds of the Neotropics: the **Red Siskin**.



October 30

This morning we started very early and just after the break of dawn we were stopping roadside for a couple of **Rufous Crab-Hawks** (DC) in full view. We made a quick stop to be eaten by sandflies at Hope Canal, but had got good views of Scarlet Ibis, Tricolored Heron and some Ruddy Ground-Doves, etc. We then continued towards Mahaica River nailing down loads of more common stuff along the road like Smooth-billed Ani, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Black-collared Hawk, and the usual lot of Cattle Egrets in the rice fields.

Once at the river, **Hoatzins** (LM) were

everywhere as well as Little Cuckoos; a nice male Black-crested Antshrike that performed very well as well as the diminutive Spotted Tody-Flycatcher. A family group of three White-bellied Piculets came into great view after a bit of playback and we also nailed down a couple of Blood-colored Woodpeckers working on a nest hole... most of our day targets were in the bag before 9 am!



We returned to our boat driver's place for a delicious breakfast, also seeing Green and Ringed Kingfishers, as well as Ashy-headed Greenlet and a cooperative Silvered Antbird that offered us a show also. We took our van again and made stops for Long-winged Harrier, Pearl Kite, and even spotted more Rufous Crab-Hawks from the van.

A final stop on the seawall before hitting the hotel for lunch delivered Yellow-billed, Royal, and Large-billed Terns, as well as Black Skimmers, Osprey, Sanderlings, and the like. In the afternoon, we visited the Georgetown Botanical Gardens and got loads of Yellow-crowned and Orange-winged Parrots, as well as Red-shouldered Macaws, Great and Lesser Kiskadees, Spotted and Common Tody-Flycatchers, and Red-billed (White-throated) Toucan as well as Black-necked Aracari. Great Horned Owls made their show as well as Zone-tailed Hawks and an impressive Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle!



October 31

We had a leisurely start today; with a civilized 7:30 am breakfast to get to the airport for an 11:00ish am charter flight to Fairview Village with a stop at **Kaieteur Falls National Park** (DC). Our flight was a bit delayed by heavy rain but eventually we landed around noon in Kaieteur. After some drinks and snacks –and checking the beautiful sundews in the white sand poor soils- we started nailing down our targets with a couple of very responsive Rufous-crowned Elaenias nearby the air stripe and continued with **Guianan Cock-of-the-rock** (DC) show by a few males and females.



I was trawling for Roraiman Antbirds and indeed, their quick response got us away from the orange birds. A very responsive couple came into tape and gave us the best views ever I have got of this species with a group in either Venezuela or Guyana. We were enjoying the magnificent views of the falls when an Orange-breasted Falcon called and got us busy. But it wasn't until we reached the next viewing point that we could locate it and see it through the scope having a shower in the other side of the valley. White-tipped were the only swifts around and we indeed found the endemic Golden Rocket Frogs. We left the place with a nice feeling of accomplishment and elated by the views our pilot Joe gave us of these monumental falls; landed in Fairview and quickly we were birding at Iwokrama River Lodge gardens enjoying some of the usual suspects

like Giant Cowbirds, our first Swallow-winged Puffbirds and Red-and-green Macaws. We went on the Essequibo River and quickly after sunset found very responsive Ladder-tailed Nightjars so returned for dinner and well-deserved rest.

November 01

This morning, we had an early breakfast and departed on our boats down the Essequibo River to reach Turtle Mountain. On the way, we found the usual -but gorgeous!- Black-collared Swallows and did some stops to study the differences between the croaking Channel-billed Toucans and the yelping White-throated (or Red-billed) Toucans. Black-chinned Antbirds received us upon getting our feet on dry land and once we reached the forest gap by the camp, a crazily obliging and cracker looking Ferruginous-backed Antbird made us step back into the forest trails



to enjoy it singing its heart out. We spent some good time at the opening gap but unfortunately besides some Rusty-margined Flycatchers and Giant Cowbirds we did see not much else. So we got to the trail and activity started to pick up with superb views of **Yellow-billed Jacamar** (DC) and noisy Dusky Pihás.

We worked for a while to see White-crested Spadebills and some understory flocks delivered Dusky-throated and Cinereous Antshrikes as well as very responsive Rufous-bellied and Grey Antwrens. We did not walk all the way to the top of the mountain as we had seen the Falcon on the falls the previous day, but Brayan wanted to take a look so he did take a run and went all the way up and worked out a bit. Returning we got our first colorful Guianan Toucanets and Guianan Warbling Antbirds.



We returned to the lodge –seeing a beautiful fer-de-lance in the scope- for lunch and after a little rest we hit the trails again having some Rufous-throated Antbirds responding to tape being only glimpsed by some of the group. Adrenaline rushed for almost an hour playing with a Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo that came very close several times but never really allowed any views; we finally visited the Capuchinbird lekking area having some views as was getting dark already. Night birding gave us excellent views of **Northern Tawny-bellied Screech-Owls** (DC) in the entrance road.

November 02

Early morning before breakfast we were playing again with the Ground-Cuckoo but it was not even as responsive as yesterday. We then got better views of Capuchinbirds and returned for breakfast on the lodge and to start moving south. Our first stop in the road allowed us to enjoy a gang of 12 Grey-winged Trumpeters crossing the road, calling, singing, and interacting a lot... one of those only-in-Guyana experiences!

We also stopped for Double-toothed Kite and a Southern Tamandua before getting to the poorer soils white-sand Moriche area. Once there, we got Bronzy Jacamars and Black Manakins and some of the group saw White-crowned Manakin also... not bad to be birding in the middle of the day under high temperatures. We got to Atta Lodge, enjoyed a nice lunch and while having noon showers some got Caica Parrots in the scope. We did a short walk on the loop trail in the later afternoon, and a fruiting fig tree delivered my Guyana nemesis bird: **Crimson Fruitcrow!** (DC) (Third time's the charm). The same fruiting tree also got plenty of Screaming Pihas, Spix's Guans, and Golden-winged Parakeets, as well as some White-throated Manakins and Spotted Tanagers.



Returning to the lodge we got lovely views of Purple-breasted Cotinga in the scope. Our night birding as usual produced White-winged Potoo, a Neotropical-birding-wise MEGA, and Black-banded Owl, both sharply and quickly spotted by John Christian the Atta local extremely good guide.

November 03

This morning, while having early coffee in the lodge, we got scope views of the 3 beast *Celeus* woodpeckers around: Waved, Cream-colored, and Ringed; Cayenne Jays were also flying by and **Black Curassows** (DC) feeding on leftovers in the gardens. We then went to the Canopy Walkway for some hours getting us Guianan Red Cotinga flying by below our feet, good views of Red-and-black and Yellow-green Grosbeaks, as well as a Black-spotted Barbet and a Guianan Tyrannulet just above our heads.

A lazy Guianan Puffbird finally responded to our playback and came to perch just above platform number two. A popular tippy-top perch was used by White-lored Euphonias,



Pompadour and Spangled Cotingas and we indeed got them all in the scope at a nice eye level on the canopy. Both Spot-tailed and Todd's Antwrens were very active and responded to tape.

Returning to the lodge we got entertained by a flock with White-flanked, Grey and Brown-bellied Antwrens, as well as our first Blackpoll Warblers. Just after lunch and great showers to cool down a bit, we enjoyed a female Fiery-tailed Aowlbill that posed for everyone on the scope. We then left on our cars to explore the nearby white-sand forest where the omnipresent Red-legged Tinamou could be heard singing in the distance all the time. We saw again Bronzy Jacamars and added the Northern (Eastern) Slaty Antshrike to our list.

We then drove to a new spot where few months ago Ron Allicock and our local Atta guide John Christian had a special lifer and got into a forest trail at night for 10 minutes... after some playback we got some responses and the adrenaline rushed, but eventually this rare nocturnal bird came quiet; some minutes passed and we moved to another spot, torching the canopy unsuccessfully scanning for this well-camouflaged bird. We got some distant responses again so we moved back to our original spot, and after some more scanning Ron got us into this superb Rufous Potoo... a very rare bird and actually a lifer for everyone but Ron, John Christian and myself that had found it after my last Sunrise Birding trip in the white-sand forests near Iquitos in Peru.



Driving back to Atta lodge, John Christian found us Rufous Nightjar and **Common Potoo** (DC) spotlighting from the top of our lead car and we got to lodge to find we were treated with a special final dinner out in the garden with candles joined by a White-winged Potoo singing in the background that we eventually found and couldn't avoid spotting in the scope... what a blast of a night!

November 04

Before leaving the area today we decided to give another try for the Guianan Schiffornis in the white-sand patch nearby (one I found some years ago with local Atta Lodge guide John Christian and it is nowadays one of the obligate stops nearby); with a little bit of patience we all eventually got very good views of this endemic. We then started to move on the road South towards Surama Lodge finding finally our Dusky Purpletufts perched in treetops high up in the canopy. We also made stops at a colony of Red-rumped Caciques and to scope some Dusky Parrots and at a bridge where we got Giant River Otters. Our main stop en-route to the lodge was at the Harpy Eagle nest trail; we went

into it for some 45 minutes, hearing White Bellbirds all the time singing in the background, and eventually reached the nesting tree... we were looking for a relatively oldish juvenile bird, hatched more than 12 months ago, so we had to scan everywhere as it had left the nest quite a few weeks ago. We the guides roved all the area, and eventually after some 20 minutes I located the eagle perched in a nearby tree; we got all the group on it, everyone got scope views, some snapped some quick photos, and we were back on the road –super happy- an hour later arriving to Surama for lunch.



Harpy Eagle (LM)

In the afternoon, we went looking for the Great Potoo that roosts near the village without success, but in reward, got great views of a family groups of Golden-spangled Piculets; also, some more common stuff like Greenish Elaenia, Short-crested Flycatcher, Red-and-green Macaws, Swallow-winged Puffbirds and singing Cinereous Tinamous we got while walking back to lodge. That nigh we went nearby the lodge for some birds and got Lesser Nighthawk, Pauraque and White-tailed Nightjar.

November 05

We started early today and after breakfast we were doing some road-stops where we nailed down some good Emerald hummers: Blue-tailed, White-chested, and Glittering-throated, as well as all the big billed frugivorous ones around: Green and Black-necked Aracaris, and Channel-billed and White-throated Toucans. We then continued to the Cock-of-the-rock lek trail, and enjoyed a full show with several males and females around coming to ignite some action we got the privilege to watch and photograph.

Leaving the lek, we heard a distant ground cuckoo again but it did not want to play with us... meanwhile we enjoyed great views of a Black Nunbird. After photographing some Savanna Hawks near the airstrip, we enjoyed another of those Surama earthy lunches and went for a rest and siesta during the hot midday.

In the afternoon we hit the Burro Burro Trail entrance but was rather slow (but for some Red-faced Black Spider Monkeys that gave us superb views) with some species of antbirds not interested in responding to tape; we got a couple of Lined Forest-Falcons that only gave us brief quick low-flying views, and a Mottled Owl that showed very well later at night. Returning to the lodge, we got a difficult to ID nightjar in the road, so our local guide Leon got rid of his gear and shoes, and slowly approached the bird with his headlamp on it all the time until it captured it with his own hands... he showed so much field craft doing it, that we coined the phrase “**Keep Leon indoors!**” and made fun about it during the whole trip (BTW, the bird was a Blackish Nightjar).

November 06

We had some time to do some local birding before leaving this fantastic place, so we went to the nearby grassy open areas to try for Ocellated Crane, which we only heard in the distance; instead, we were rewarded with great views of Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle just for breakfast whit finally some good views of Finsch's Euphonia.



We left the lodge and some got **Red-fan Parrot** (LM), Spix's Guan, Green Aracari and Crested and Green Oropendolas while others that were ahead got Rufous-tailed Jacamar and Black-crested Antshrike. We did an obligatory road stop to buy delicious local-made peanut butter from a fair-trade store, and also added White-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, and others on the go. We stopped at a Jabiru nest to enjoy this crazy beast and take some photos. We got to Caiman House for a late lunch, and we visited a nearby trail to try for Blue-backed Manakin but it was quite a dark afternoon so we returned empty to the lodge.

November 07

We started super early and were positioned on our advantageous higher viewing point scanning for Giant Anteaters; we spent some good minutes there, and even helped by a

cowboy (in a motorbike) that had been roving the area a couple of hours ago before sunrise, could locate nothing, so we moved. We reached our swampy place to try for Bearded Tachuri, and were just starting to serve picnic breakfasts, when Ron noticed one Tachuri just next to our group... we all got superb close views.

We started round 2 with breakfast, when to our surprise Leon found us a Crested Doradito in the same marsh; he then started bushwhacking in the swamp making it move a bit and we all lined and got great views and photos. We finally enjoyed breakfast and moved.



We did a short stop to try a good stake-out for White-tailed Nightjar, and we all enjoyed superb views of males and females roosting on this little bushy island in the middle of the Rupununi pastures; another stake out where we have got it in past trips got us trying again for Ocellated Crake but nothing responded this time so we headed back. Nearby lodge we tried a nearby patch getting scope views of Spotted Puffbird, an amazing show of **Blue-backed Manakins** (DC), a very cooperative Pale-tipped Inezia, and a cute Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher before heading back

for a nice lunch and deserved rest and refreshing showers on the heat of the noontime.

Midafternoon, we boarded our skiffs and went on the Rupununi River getting Green, Amazon and Ringed Kingfishers, several Osprey, Cream-colored Woodpecker, among many more birds. We visited a lake where we got Band-tailed Nighthawks party and returning to lodge we got an Amazonian Tree Boa and a type of Fire Snake, along dozens of Lesser Fishing Bats.

November 08

We left 4:00 am for the town of Karasabi where we had a special bird to look for, and on the road our early start efforts were compensated by the sighting of a mother Giant Anteater carrying a baby on her back running in the savanna. Breakfast stop got us plenty of the beautiful Maguari and some of the more common Wood Storks and a huge Yellow-tailed Cibo just crossed the road in front of one of our cars. We reached the village and as the group was with Ron, Leon and Marissa, and the local guides, I decided to stay behind as my stomach had been quite funny the last 24 hours; I got a shower and crashed in a hammock at a local's house, and when I opened my eyes it was already past 1:00 pm so I immediately knew these guys had been having a hard time to locate the special birds that we came here especially for.

Around 2:00 pm my crew appeared, and even sweaty and tired they were quite happy to have seen (scope views even!) the splendid –and quite range restricted- **Sun Parakeets** (LM). We all got lunch and drove to Manari Ranch near Lethem arriving just after dusk. As this was a long driving day through endless savannas, we scored Turkey, Lesser Yellow-headed, Black, and King Vultures, White-tailed, Snail, and Pearl Kites, Long-winged Harrier, Black-collared, Savanna, Great Black, Roadside, White-tailed, and Grey-lined Hawks, Northern Crested and Yellow-headed Caracaras, Laughing and Peregrine Falcons, and American Kestrels.



November 09

We had another super early start today (3:00 am) and drove to the Sand Creek village area to get breakfast from the cars, and go to seat at a rocky outcrop in the middle of the savanna to wait... but not for long! Our local experts Leroy and Asaph quickly located our main targets and soon we were enjoying one of the rarest Neotropical birds in the scope: Red Siskin. We got great views of males, and females, and little groups of



up to 6 individuals, great stuff! – A Lineated Woodpecker entertained us also for a while in the spot. This year, we had seen the siskins closer to our lodge than any other trip, so it sounds we will keep coming to this place next years instead and saving some time.

Driving to Dadanawa Ranch for lunch, we got Aplomado Falcon super

close to the car. We enjoyed a superb beef lunch and leaving the ranch made stops to grab some more neat specialties like Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin and White-naped Xenopsaris, and stop to enjoy a pack of Crab-eating Foxes chasing each other for a while. Got back to our lodge and crashed to bed.

November 10

Today we got a civilized breakfast in the ranch and then drove to the Irang River area in the very border with Brazil. While driving, a **Giant Anteater** (LM) crossed in front of our convoy and Leroy rapidly left the wheel and jumped out of his car and -barefoot- went speedy chasing the anteater so it made a turn and we could get longer views. Once in our main targets area, we went into a little window inside the bush and called the Rio Branco Antbird, and in less than half a minute, we got a couple singing on top of our heads giving us such an amusing performance. From the same area, we called our second super-high-restricted-range target bird and again, seconds later; we were enjoying views of Hoary-throated Spinetail... what a morning!



We moved nearby and heard a Crestless Curassow, but despite trying a couple of places, we could not see or hear it again. Driving that morning we got plenty of other marshy/savanna birds like White-faced Whistling and Muscovy Ducks, Least and Pied-billed Grebes, Wood Stork, Jabiru, Buff-necked Ibis, Striated, Cocoli, and Little Blue Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets, Sungrebe, Purple Gallinule, and Southern Lapwing. We packed and lunch at the ranch, and then took our flight back to Georgetown where we spent the night for international flights next day.

Again, as usual, the Guyana was a superb trip! We recorded 407 species of birds including many regional endemics and got great views of all main targets. Mammals and other interesting creatures entertained us along the amazing landscapes this country has. I want to thank all our local guides and boat/4x4 drivers, as well as all our clients for making this an enjoyable and successful trip!



An airplane with a Harpy Eagle on the tail. Always a good sign! (DC)



Sundews at Kaieteur Falls (DC)