ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Guyana

Comprehensive Birds & Wildlife I

19th January to 2nd February 2022 (15 days)



Guianan Cock-of-the-rock by Adam Riley

Guyana, a small English-speaking South American country nestled on the Atlantic Coast east of Venezuela, is fast becoming recognised as one of South America's top birding and wildlife destinations. Due to a tiny population and an incredibly high proportion of undisturbed habitat, Guyana hosts some of the last relatively unexplored wildernesses on Earth. A variety of pristine ecosystems occur here, from lowland rainforests that stretch as far as the eye can see, to the savannahs and waterways of the famed Rupununi region, not to mention the dramatic Kaieteur Falls (one of the world's highest single-drop waterfalls), all of which ensures that this magical destination has something to offer every birder and nature enthusiast. Locations we visit include Iwokrama, Atta and Surama Lodges. Numerous large

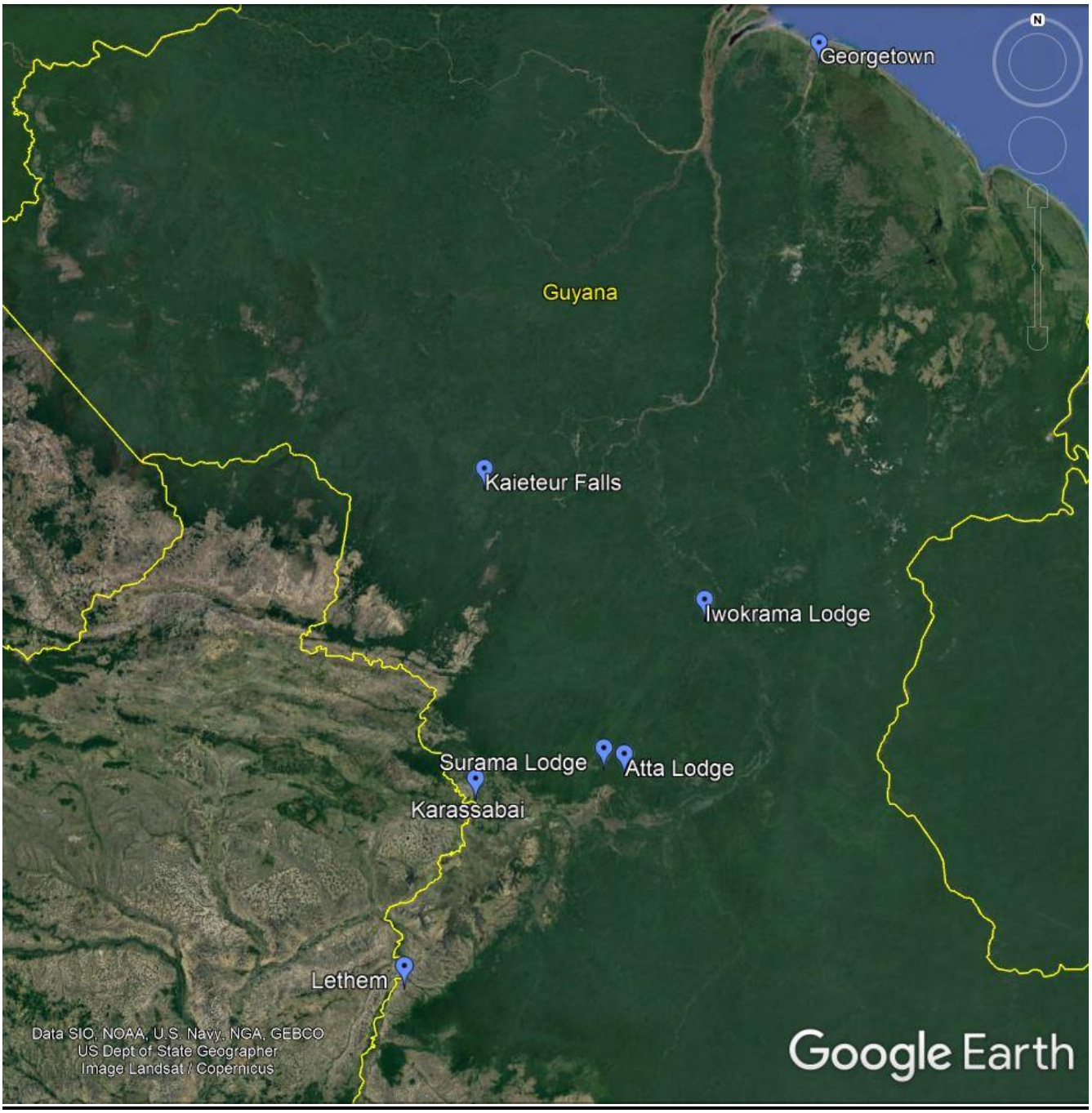
macaws, Sun Parakeet, Red Siskin, Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, Scarlet Ibis, Rio Branco Antbird, Guianan Red Cotinga, Capuchinbird, Crimson Fruitcrow, Grey-winged Trumpeter and Harpy Eagle are just some of the many birding highlights that can be anticipated on this tour! Mammals are also a major emphasis, and we can expect species ranging from the amazing Giant Anteater to various New World monkeys, plus a good chance to see the elusive Jaguar!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Georgetown**
Day 2	**Georgetown and surrounds**
Day 3	**Georgetown to Iwokrama River Lodge via Kaieteur Falls**
Day 4	**Iwokrama River Lodge and surrounds**
Day 5	**Iwokrama River Lodge to Atta Rainforest Lodge**
Day 6	**Atta Rainforest Lodge**
Day 7	**Atta Rainforest Lodge to Surama Lodge**
Days 8 & 9	**Surama Lodge and surrounds**
Day 10	**Surama Lodge to the Northern Rupununi Savannah**
Day 11	**Northern Rupununi Savannah**
Day 12	**Northern Rupununi Savannah to Letham via Karassabai**
Day 13	**Red Siskin quest**
Day 14	**South Ireng River and afternoon flight to Georgetown**
Day 15	**Final departures from Georgetown**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



THE TOUR IN DETAIL



Black-capped Donacobius by Adam Riley

Day 1: Arrival in Georgetown. After arriving in the vibrant city of Georgetown, we will transfer to our comfortable hotel for the next two nights. Georgetown is located in the north of Guyana on the Atlantic coast, and about one-third of the country's population lives in this English-speaking metropolis.

Day 2: Georgetown surroundings. We will depart very early this morning to travel along the coast, eastward from Georgetown, to look for the first of many range-restricted species. These include the highly localised Blood-colored Woodpecker, an astonishingly colourful *Veniliornis* found only in the Guianas and almost wholly limited to the narrow coastal plain, plus the attractive Rufous Crab Hawk, a species that has been negatively affected by the destruction of its preferred mangrove habitat. We will also search for the poorly-known White-bellied Piculet that can be found here and the localised Plain-bellied Emerald. Other birding targets in these mangrove forests include Little Cuckoo, Straight-billed and Buff-throated Woodcreepers, the attractive Black-crested Antshrike, Sooty-headed, Southern Beardless and Mouse-coloured Tyrannulets, Pale-tipped Inezia, Boat-billed Tody-Tyrant, Spotted Tody-Flycatcher, White-winged Becard, Violaceous Euphonia, Hooded Tanager and Bicoloured Conebill.

Depending on tides, we may augment our return journey by boarding a small fishing boat that will ferry us to nearby mudflats to search for waders (a variety of northern migrants should be added to our burgeoning lists), the brilliant Scarlet Ibis, Black Skimmer, Brown Pelican and Magnificent Frigatebird. A nearby heronry also allows opportunities to see more widespread species, including Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Little Blue Heron, and Western Cattle and Snowy Egrets.



Blood-colored Woodpecker by Adam Riley

Day 3: Georgetown to Iwokrama River Lodge via Kaieteur Falls. Depending on our internal flight times, we may have some time to visit the Georgetown Botanical Gardens. Despite being located in central Georgetown, the expansive grounds and large tropical trees, lawns and wetlands provide for exciting birding. Some of the species we are likely to see include Snail Kite, Yellow-headed Caracara, Wattled Jacana, Pale-vented Pigeon, numerous Ruddy Ground Doves, Red-shouldered Macaw, Green-rumped



Kaieteur Falls from the air by Jonathan Rossouw

Parrotlet, the localised Festive Amazon, Yellow-crowned and Orange-winged Amazons in good numbers, Greater and Smooth-billed Anis, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, the cute Common Tody-Flycatcher, Pied Water-Tyrant, noisy Rusty-margined Flycatchers and Great Kiskadees, Tropical and Grey Kingbirds, the lovely Black-capped Donacobius, Tropical Mockingbird, Pale-breasted Thrush, Yellow Warbler, Yellow Oriole, Carib Grackle, Red-capped Cardinal, Blue-grey, Palm and Turquoise Tanagers, and the uncommon Wing-barred Seedeater. This will be a fine introduction to the birds of Guyana!

After breakfast, we will transfer to the airport at nearby Ogle, where Red-breasted Blackbirds sing and Snail Kites patrol the skies. From here we'll then fly by aircraft to Kaieteur, the world's highest free-falling waterfall. Though Venezuela's Angel Falls are greater in total height, their filamentous drop occurs by stages whereas Kaieteur is a single, massive, thundering cataract 100 meters (over 300 ft) wide, created as the Potaro River makes a sheer drop of 228 meters (almost 750 ft), nearly five times the height of Niagara! The spectacle is all the more impressive for its remoteness and it is altogether possible that we'll be the only persons viewing it at the time. Here we will also use the opportunity to look for White-chinned and White-tipped Swifts swirling over the gorge, and perhaps we'll be lucky enough to see the astonishingly colourful Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, White-tailed Goldenthroat or Musician Wren in the surrounding vegetation, or even Orange-breasted Falcon soaring over the gorge as it hunts for swifts.



Black Nunbird by Dubi Shapiro

Thereafter, we will take to the only road that cuts through the centre of Guyana, linking the coast with the savannahs, and head southwards to Iwokrama River Lodge. This route will mostly be through pristine forest and we will keep a careful lookout for Red-and-green, Scarlet and Blue-and-yellow Macaws, which often fly over the road. Constant watching ahead may also reveal family groups of Grey-winged Trumpeters, while chances for a wide variety of mammals exist, including the mythical Jaguar, as well as Puma, Ocelot and peccaries, though we will require a great deal of luck to spot any of the aforementioned felines.

At Iwokrama River Lodge itself, this afternoon, we will then bird the Screaming Piha Trail, which is home to an incredible density of its namesake; and, between the piercing chorus of piha screams, we will listen and look out for Bronzy Jacamar, Chestnut and Waved Woodpeckers, Amazonian and Dusky-throated Antshrikes, Grey Antbird, Collared Trogon, Strong-billed, Plain-brown and White-chinned Woodcreepers, and White-crowned



Orange-breasted Falcon by Adam Riley

and Golden-headed Manakins. If time allows, we may also do some birding around the lodge clearing, where we will keep a particular eye out for Little Chachalaca, Lined Forest Falcon, flocks of Painted and Golden-winged Parakeets, Blue-tailed Emerald, Black-throated Trogon, Black Nunbird, the spectacular Pompadour Cotinga, Black-necked Aracari, the Red-billed form of White-throated Toucan, Ringed Woodpecker, Crested Oropendola, Moriche Oriole, White-shouldered Tanager, and Lesson's, Ruddy-breasted and Chestnut-bellied Seedeaters, which have all been seen in this vicinity on previous Rockjumper tours.

Day 4: Iwokrama River Lodge and surrounds. The forest that surrounds the Iwokrama Field Station is as diverse as it is extensive. Making an early start this morning, our activities will include embarkation on the Essequibo River and circumnavigation of the forest-choked Indian House Island, giving us a fantastic chance to experience the dawn song while riding on the river. Birds we will seek include several species of tinamou (their melancholy voices are more often heard that the birds are seen), Marbled Wood Quail, Guianan Streaked Antwren, Band-rumped Swift, and White-banded and Black-collared Swallows, before returning to the lodge for breakfast.

We, thereafter, set out by boat for the journey to the foot of Turtle Mountain. Along the way, Harpy Eagle has been seen and we may find Greater Yellow-headed and King Vultures, Grey-headed, Double-toothed and Plumbeous Kites, and Great Black and secretive Black-faced Hawks. This section of the river is also good for Scaled Pigeon as well as Giant River Otter. Upon reaching Turtle Mountain we will then explore the trails for a few hours, climbing to an elevation of about 900 feet (300m), allowing for stunning views of the forest canopy below and the marvellous Tepuis in the distance – provided the sky is clear! We also have a chance for fly-by views of one or more of five potential eagle species. In addition, this is one of the best stake-outs anywhere for the rare and localised Orange-breasted Falcon.



Giant River Otter by Adam Riley

The trails in this section of the forest are particularly active and rich mixed species bird flocks are regularly encountered. Here we may look for the near-endemic Green Aracari, White Bellbird, Spix's and Marail Guans, Squirrel and the scarcer Black-bellied Cuckoos, Eastern Long-tailed and Reddish Hermits, Grey-breasted Sabrewing, Blue-crowned Motmot, Green-backed (Amazonian White-tailed) Trogon, Great Jacamar, the impressive Red-



Harpy Eagle by Adam Riley

necked Woodpecker, attractive Collared Puffbird, White-lored Tyrannulet and Helmeted Pygmy Tyrant (which is often heard in the vine tangles above our heads). Careful searching of mid-level and sub-canopy flocks here have turned up Cinnamon-rumped Foliage-gleaner, Plain Xenops, Long-tailed, Wedge-billed, Amazonian Barred, Chestnut-rumped, Buff-throated and Lineated Woodcreepers, Mouse-coloured, Fasciated and Cinereous Antshrikes, Todd's, White-flanked, Brown-bellied and the localised Rufous-bellied Antwrens, Sepia-capped Flycatcher and secretive Golden-crowned Spadebill. Antbirds are also prolific and previous tours have enjoyed superb views of the remarkable White-plumed Antbird here as well as another army ant swarm follower, Rufous-throated Antbird.

We will also visit Kurupukari Falls to view the Amerindian Petroglyphs (Please note that this is dependent on the water level) and en route we should find Yellow-billed and Large-billed Terns. In the evening, we will then drive along the road in search of Jaguar, after which we will spot for nocturnal birds on the return journey. Here we stand chances for Common, Long-tailed and even Rufous Potoo, Blackish and Ladder-tailed Nightjars, and owls including Crested and Spectacled.

The riverine habitat near the field station offers open views from the river edge as well as from the comfortable thatch-covered dining area. Here we will keep our eyes out for a resident pair of Bat Falcons, Red-throated Caracara and congregations of Giant Cowbird and Pied Plover on the lodge lawns. Birdwatching along the riverbank in surrounding areas might produce our first sightings of the gaudy Sunbittern, Green Ibis or Capped Heron. A unique mammal also occurs in this area, the Brown-bearded Saki Monkey, among other more widespread species such as Weeping Capuchin, Red Howler and Common Squirrel Monkey.



Guianan Red Howler Monkey by Adam Riley

Day 5: Iwokrama River Lodge to Atta Rainforest Lodge. Today we transfer before dawn along the road through the heart of the Iwokrama Forest, and we again stand a good chance to see the elusive Jaguar. This forest is rapidly gaining an international reputation for its healthy Jaguar population, which seems not to be troubled by the



Crimson Fruitcrow by Dubi Shapiro

appearance of curious humans. No promises, but many have been lucky! Other large Neotropical mammals that are possible include Brazilian Tapir, Red Brocket Deer, Collared and White-lipped Peccary, and even Puma. We will scan for these from the road as the light rises over the forest, but will be fortunate indeed to connect with any of these larger mammals.

The road also offers excellent birding, including a locality known as Mori Scrub that is characterised by an unusually low, sandy forest. This, in turn, supports an interesting and unique assemblage of bird species, among them Rufous-crowned Elaenia, Black Manakin and Red-shouldered Tanager. Other birds we will stop and look for at numerous locations include Guianan Red Cotinga, the stunning Blue-backed Tanager, Olive-green Tyrannulet and, if we are very fortunate, a Rufous-winged Ground Cuckoo dashing across the road! Our journey continues onwards to the Atta Canopy Walkway, where we will spend the next three nights at the comfortable accommodations of the nearby Atta Lodge.

Our afternoon will be spent birding from the Atta Canopy Walkway, a 500 foot (150 meter) long walkway that consists of four platforms connected by a series of suspended walkways, granting us a great view from the vantage of 100 feet (35m) up in the canopy. This time of day is perfect for viewing parrots and, besides the three massive species of macaws (Blue-and-yellow, Scarlet and Red-and-green) that occur so abundantly in these little disturbed and protected forests, we should see Caica, Dusky, Black-headed and Blue-headed Parrots, as well as noisy Mealy and threatened Blue-cheeked Amazons as they head off to their roosts. We will also keep a look out for swifts and amongst the commoner species we will search out the little known Chapman's Swift. We'll then descend the tower at dusk and, walking back to the lodge, we will try for the stunning White-winged Potoo at a reliable stake-out. If anyone is up for a night walk after dinner, chances exist for the mythical Giant Armadillo as well as several other smaller armadillo species, Kinkajou, Olingo, and, who knows, Jaguars are resident around camp….



Guianan Toucanet by Dubi Shapiro

Day 6: Atta Rainforest Lodge. This morning we can again take the special opportunity to spend time in the fabulous rainforest canopy. Here we will welcome the dawn chorus while Short-tailed Nighthawks settle in for the day, swifts take to the sky, White-throated and Channel-billed Toucans yodel from conspicuous perches, Barred Forest Falcons call loudly, Black Caracara flocks scream overhead, the range-restricted Guianan Toucanet hop around like clockwork



Black Curassow by Adam Riley

toys, Plumbeous Pigeon sit atop trees to soak up the first rays of sunlight, and a whole host of crown specialists come within our view. Possibilities include Pied and Guianan White-necked Puffbirds that are sometimes astonishingly close, Black-tailed and Black-crowned Tityras, active families of Cayenne Jay, and the lovely Golden-sided Euphonia. Icterids are regularly seen and include Crested and Green Oropendolas and flocks of Yellow-rumped and Red-rumped Caciques.

With enough time in this habitat, an arboreal mixed flock is likely to move through, allowing for eye-level views of a variety of tanagers and tyrant-flycatchers. These include White-lored and Slender-footed Tyrannulet, plus the localised Spot-tailed and Todd's Antwrens, which can often be found moving together. The walkway is also an excellent place to look for various cotingas, including the poorly-known and range-restricted Dusky Purpletuft; and if there are any suitable fruiting trees nearby, we stand an excellent chance of finding the more widespread Spangled and breathtakingly stunning Purple-breasted Cotinga as well.

Another area we will be birding is the clearing right in the vicinity of the lodge, as this is one of the best places to find another of Guyana's specialities – the gorgeous Crimson Fruitcrow. This incredibly bright but scarce species sometimes comes to feed in the nearby trees if there is fruit available, which would also likely produce sightings of the outrageous Pompadour Cotinga and noisy Purple-throated Fruitcrow. The clearing is a reliable site for Black Curassow as well since there is a habituated family party that regularly passes through.

Mixed bird flocks in the vicinity can really be spectacular, occasionally containing over 40 attending species! These may include Pygmy, Ash-winged and Long-winged Antwrens amongst other species in the group, Blue and Black-faced Dacnis, Purple and Green Honeycreepers, White-shouldered and Yellow-backed Tanagers, cute Long-billed Gnatwrens, Buff-cheeked Greenlet, Violaceous, White-lored and White-vented Euphonias, Helmeted and the diminutive Short-tailed Pygmy Tyrant (the world's smallest passerine), Yellow-margined and Rufous-tailed Flatbills, both Great and Paradise Jacamars, Yellow-green Grosbeak



Ferruginous-backed Antbird by Adam Riley

and the poorly-known Olive-green Tyrannulet, among many others.



Crimson Topaz by Murray Cooper

The maniacal growls of Red Howler Monkey troops can be heard throughout the forest, although it takes a bit more luck to see the amazing Black Spider Monkeys brachiating through the upper canopy storey. Not far from the main Iwokrama Road, we will visit an area of secondary forest edge where a blackwater stream crosses the road. Here the showy Red-fan Parrot often flies over, and we will listen for tough birds such as Red-billed Woodcreeper, Slaty-backed Forest Falcon, Greyish Mourner, Musician Wren, Rose-breasted Chat, Red-and-black Grosbeak and the tough Black-throated Antshrike. One of the star birds is a regular visitor, the outstanding Crimson Topaz, certainly amongst the most beautiful of all hummingbirds, which can be seen hovering above the water in search of insects. Other possible species include Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Blue-tailed Emerald, White-necked Jacobin and the striking Black-eared Fairy. We will also take the time to bird along the jungle trails where flocks include White-plumed, Spot-winged, White-browed, Scale-backed and Ferruginous-backed Antbirds, Ash-winged and Long-billed Antwrens, Coraya Wren and McConnell's and Grey-crowned Flycatchers; besides, we have second chances for many birds already mentioned in the Iwokrama section.

Day 7: Atta Rainforest Lodge to Surama Lodge. We have a final opportunity for early morning birding on the walkway or jungle trails in the hope of seeing any species we may still be seeking better views of or haven't yet connected with. These could include the difficult Lilac-tailed Parrotlet, Thrush-like Antpitta, Flame-crested and Fulvous-crested Tanagers, Slate-colored and the hard to see Blue-black Grosbeak, Black-capped Becard, Grey-fronted Dove, Ruddy Pigeon and Rufous-throated Sapphire. Our 2011 Rockjumper tour was fortunate enough to enjoy perched views of a Crested Eagle on the trails near Atta Lodge.



Purple-throated Fruitcrow by Murray Cooper

After breakfast, we will then depart for the Cock-of-the-rock Trail, an easy 20-minute walk, to hopefully have our first view of the incomparable Guianan Cock-of-the-rock. Much like the bizarre rockfowl of West Africa, the female incubates her eggs in a nest securely fastened with viscous mud to the slope of a rock face. Peering around such rocks, we will be in a position to behold our first views of the male Guianan Cock-of-the-



Capuchinbird by Adam Riley

rock, which displays by clinging to the sides of thick twisted vines. Its luminous orange colouration, extraordinary feather plumes that it outstretches during its display, and outrageous headdress-like crest make this astonishing creature one of the most extraordinary birds on Earth, and we hope for some fantastic views during our time here!

Our journey then continues to the Amerindian community of Surama. On arrival, we will receive a traditional welcome from a village counsellor before settling into our accommodation. Our simple but comfortable lodge is located literally right at the boundary between Guyana's massive rainforests and the vast, open Rupununi Savannah, a stark habitat change that allows for a wide range of avian possibilities. After lunch, we will walk through the forest to the Burro Burro River for a quiet and skilfully guided paddle; where, aside from birds, we'll also search the banks for mammals, including family groups of Giant River Otter, Tapir, Tayra and Black Spider Monkey, amongst other species. On the bird front, this is a particularly great site for kingfishers and we may see Green-and-rufous, Green, Amazon and Ringed. A night walk back to our lodge could reveal nocturnal birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects, including swarms of fireflies.

Days 8 & 9: Surama Lodge & surrounds. We have two full days to bird the surrounds of Surama. On one day we will visit a nearby Harpy Eagle nest, assuming it is currently active. The nest itself is located in a giant emergent tree only a few miles from the village and if we are extremely fortunate, we may observe one of the adult birds bringing a sloth or monkey to feed its hungry chick. Another of the special birds that can be found around Surama is the Rufous-winged Ground Cuckoo. While *Neomorphus* ground cuckoos are undoubtedly amongst the toughest family of birds to locate anywhere in the Neotropics, Surama offers one of the best-known opportunities for seeing this very sought-after and enigmatic species. To maximise our odds of finding one, we will use expert local guides to assist us. Nonetheless, we must count ourselves extremely fortunate if we succeed in securing even brief looks at this extremely elusive bird!



White-plumed Antbird by Adam Riley

As the forest near Surama seems to support a great number of antbirds, we will also be on the lookout for that wonderful phenomenon of Neotropical birding – army ant swarms! Often given away by excessive chatter or commotion, we can again consider ourselves very lucky to be mixed in among one of these incredible spectacles, where hundreds of tiny



Spotted Puffbird by Adam Riley

creatures scurry for their lives away from the merciless army ants, thereby creating a frenzy of resultant bird activity. Among numerous woodcreepers, antbirds, and tyrant-flycatchers, two exceptional birds we are unlikely to see away from such ant swarms include the near-endemic Rufous-throated and the spectacular White-plumed Antbird – the latter of which has to be seen to be believed for its remarkable head plumes! Other new species we hope to encounter during our stay here include Variegated, Cinereous, Great and Little Tinamous, White Hawk, Collared Forest Falcon, Dusky Parrot, Pale-tailed Barbthroat, Black-spotted Barbet, Cream-colored Woodpecker, Guianan Warbling, Black-throated and Dusky Antbirds, Grey Antwren, Ochre-bellied, Sulphury and attractive Yellow-throated Flycatchers, Whiskered Myiobius (Flycatcher), Cinnamon Attila, Cinereous Mourner, Lemon-chested Greenlet, Buff-breasted Wren, Silver-beaked Tanager and the shy Pectoral Sparrow. At the same time, we have chances for many of the species already mentioned at the other rainforest sites.

Potential mammals in the forested areas of Surama include troops of Weeping Capuchin, the starkly patterned Guianan Saki Monkey, and maybe even the badger-like Greater Grison. The more open grassland habitat dotted with Sandpaper Trees near our lodge supports the remarkable King Vulture, Laughing Falcon, Lesser and Yellow-bellied Elaenias, Glittering-throated Emerald, Grassland Sparrow and Buff-throated Saltator. Another star bird we will make a very special effort to locate during our stay here, and certainly one of the oddest-looking members of the cotinga family, is the fabulous Capuchinbird. Fortunately, there is a lek relatively close to our lodge, and we plan to visit this site where we should obtain great views as the males, sporting their bald blue heads, seek to attract females with their bizarre, cow-like groaning. A nearby wetland could also produce Ash-throated, Russet-crowned and Uniform Crakes at dusk. We also plan to do some night birding in the hope of locating the recently split Northern Tawny-bellied Screech Owl, Tropical Screech Owl, Lesser Nighthawk, White-tailed and Rufous Nightjars, and any one of four potoo species.



Grey-necked Wood Rail by David Shackelford

Day 10: Surama Lodge to the Northern Rupununi Savanah. After breakfast we shall have some final birding around Surama for such desirable species as Zigzag Heron and Ash-throated Crake before making our way deeper in the Northern Rupununi Savannah. During our drive, we traverse vast wetlands interspersed by gallery forest allowing for a great variety of species that are likely to include the stately Jabiru, Maguari Stork, Pinnated Bittern, flocks of Muscovy Duck, Western Osprey on the look-out for fish, Long-winged Harrier, Black-collared, White-tailed and Roadside Hawks, Limpkin, the incredible Toco Toucan, Red-bellied Macaw,



Giant Anteater by Adam Riley

Brown-throated Parakeet, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, the fluttering Short-tailed Swift, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Drab Water Tyrant and several kingfishers. We also stand a chance of spotting various primate species, including Brown Capuchin.

Birding around our lodge can be very productive, with the small patches of gallery forestproducing Spotted Puffbird, Striped Woodcreeper, Golden-spangled Piculet and possibly Capuchinbird, to name just some of our targets. In the afternoon, we will travel slowly by boat through a network of canals in the hope of finding Rufescent Tiger Heron, Sungrebe, Grey-necked Wood Rail, Green-tailed Jacamar and Lesser Kiskadee, as well as Green Ibis, Cocoi, Striated, Capped and Little Blue Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets and Purple Gallinule.

As the evening begins to approach, we will carefully scan along the embankments and peer into the undergrowth for the dark silhouette of a Crestless Curassow, often a tough bird to come to grips with. Another great experience as we enjoy the sunset glow is to watch the opening of water lily flowers. On our return, we will spotlight along the river in search of Band-tailed Nighthawk or Common Potoo and mammals that may include Giant River Otter! Our spotlights are sure to pick up a number of reptiles such as Black and Spectacled Caimans.

Day 11: Northern Rupununi Savannah. Birdwatching from daybreak to nightfall or even later, we'll devote our time here to exploring the Northern Rupununi Savannah's varied habitats, travelling by boat to certain localities both up and downstream, and by Land Rover to forest patches and wetlands. Grasslands host coveys of Crested Bobwhite, Savanna Hawks perched on fence posts at regular intervals, White-tailed and Short-tailed Hawks overhead, Southern Crested Caracara in good numbers, diminutive American Kestrels, cryptic Double-striped Thick-knees, noisy Southern Lapwings, Plain-breasted Ground Dove, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Bicoloured Wren, Eastern Meadowlark, Grassland



Sun Parakeet by Adam Riley



Rio Branco Antbird by Adam Riley

Yellow and Wedge-tailed Grass Finches, and the near-threatened Bearded Tachuri, a member of the tyrant flycatcher family that has declined markedly in recent years due to its preference for undisturbed savannah grasslands. Forest patches host Striped Cuckoo, Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Blue Ground Dove, Plain-crowned Spinetail, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, both Barred and Great Antshrikes, and Tropical Gnatcatcher. In the vicinity, we might also come across Buff-necked and the far less common Sharp-tailed Ibis and if we are very fortunate, Crested Doradito.

The gallery forest near the lodge should produce Red-legged Tinamou (certainly by vocalisation, but we will also attempt to entice one into view), Violaceous Trogon, Northern Slaty Antshrike, Black-chinned and White-bellied Antbirds, Blue-backed Manakin and the localised Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, among many others.

The river is home to Wood Stork, White-faced and Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, the rare Stripe-backed Bittern if we are fortunate, as well as families of endearing Giant River Otters, the largest of the world's otters and one that is now endangered due to the loss of pristine habitat. Further explorations may reveal Least Grebe, South American Snipe, Yellow Tyrannulet, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Cliff Flycatcher and Ruddy-breasted Seedeater.

In the evening, we will spend some more time looking for nocturnal species such as Least and Band-tailed Nighthawk, Pauraque and both White-tailed and Spot-tailed Nightjars. Here we may also find the remarkable Giant Anteater or Crab-eating Fox prowling through the grasslands.

Day 12: Northern Rupununi Savannah to Letham via Karassabai. This morning after breakfast, we will undertake the arduous drive towards Karassabai over rough roads, passing through the little-inhabited Rupununi Savannah that stretches across the central ranges of Guyana. Here Aplomado Falcons hunt over the expansive plains and Grassland Yellow Finches mix with a variety of seedeaters, including Grey, Plumbeous, Yellow-bellied and Ruddy-breasted. We also stand further good chances of encountering Giant Anteaters as they lumber across the grasslands. Numerous wetlands along the way will produce superb birding and species we have



Hoary-throated Spinetail by Adam Riley



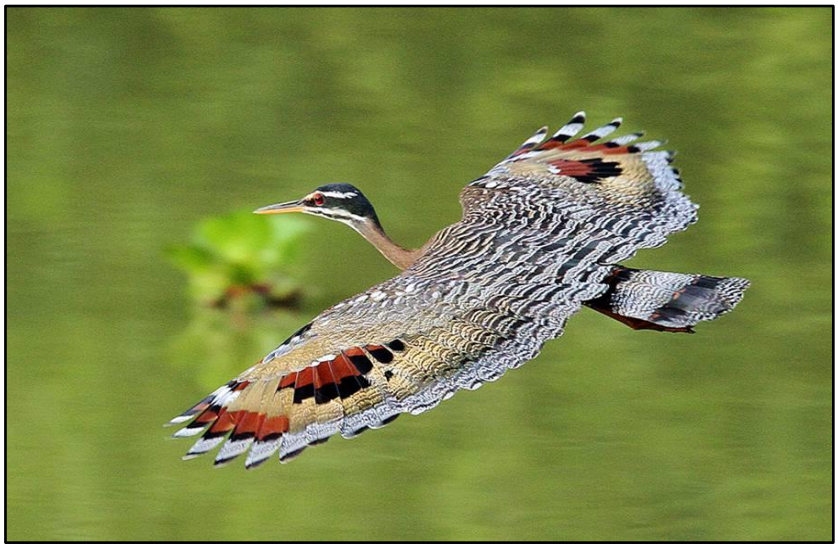
Pinnated Bittern by Adam Riley

previously encountered on this route include Sharp-tailed Ibis, good numbers of Pinnated Bittern and Yellow-hooded Blackbird. Sightings of Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures, White-tailed Kites and Savannah and White-tailed Hawks will see us through the Pakaraima Mountains and eventually to the scattered village of Karassabai and its exceptionally friendly residents.

Upon arrival, we will take the time to visit some of the locals in order to secure final permission to bird in the area. The reason for doing this is because there are very few visitors here, and we wish to ensure good future relations and ongoing conservation efforts, especially when considering that these people ultimately control the fate of the Sun Parakeet.

This remote area is the only known site, and possibly the only place left on Earth, where the critically endangered Sun Parakeet still survives in the wild. This vivid species once ranged widely across Suriname into northern Brazil, but after years of feverish illegal trapping, including rumours of entire planes jammed full with thousands of ill-fated birds, the world population now hangs in the balance with less than 2,000 individuals thought to be remaining. Nonetheless, we stand a very high likelihood of encountering these overwhelmingly colourful parakeets as they fly through the valley and feed on the fruits of surrounding trees. The intense combination of yellow and red, shared with the sheer exhilaration of watching one of the rarest and most beautiful birds on Earth, is an incredible experience indeed!

The riparian forest along this border with Brazil, offers us some very interesting opportunities – although our attention is firmly focussed on the parakeets of course. Other more widespread birds we might encounter include Toco Toucan, Yellow-throated and Streaked Flycatchers, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Hooded and Hepatic Tanagers, Small-billed Elaenia, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Orange-backed Troupial and Green-rumped Parrotlet. In the afternoon, we will then journey to Lethem, where we will settle into our accommodations for the next two nights.



Sunbittern by Matthew Matthiessen

Day 13: Red Siskin quest. Another extremely early start awaits us, as we will be travelling several hours south



Red-throated Caracara by Owen Deutsch

of Lethem to look for the highly endangered Red Siskin and Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin. A fairly large population of Red Siskin were fortuitously discovered in this region in 2003, far removed from any previously known colony, and we stand a good chance of observing this strikingly plumaged species with an estimated world population of a mere 600-6000 pairs. Aside from searching for the siskin, there should also be time for some further birding in the area and species we could encounter include American Wood Stork, Buff-necked Ibis, White-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Macaw, White-fringed Antwren, Yellow-bellied Elaenia and Red-breasted Blackbird. In the afternoon, we will undertake the return journey to Lethem, where we will spend another night at our now familiar accommodations.

Day 14: South Ireng River and afternoon flight to Georgetown. Today we will focus our attention on two birds with exceedingly restricted ranges, the Hoary-throated Spinetail and Rio Branco Antbird. Both species are only found in gallery forest along the Rio Branco River and its main tributaries, all of which ultimately flow into the Amazon. Recent agricultural pressures have seriously reduced the amount of available habitat for these birds and as a result, the spinetail is now classified as endangered, with the antbird treated as near-threatened. In order to reach suitable habitat for these birds, we will travel by boat along the Takatu River and then up the southern Ireng River, where we can see the unique mixing process of white and black waters converging. Along our journey, we might come across an attractive Maguari Stork resting on the sandbanks as well as the peculiar Capybara, before finally reaching our site along a comparatively short stretch of the river. We will specifically target the Hoary-throated Spinetail and Rio Branco Antbird in this area, although other interesting species may include Fiery-shouldered Parakeet, Pale-legged Hornero, Velvet-browed Brilliant, Chestnut-vented Conebill, Roraiman Antwren and Great Elaenia. Very few birders have ever ventured to this remote area, so a few avian surprises are certainly not out of the question!



Rupununi Savanna by David Shackelford

We shall return to our lodge for lunch, before heading to the nearby airfield for our scheduled flight back to Georgetown, where we will spend our final night in Guyana and celebrate our journey and experiences through this fantastic South American country!

Day 15: Final departures from Georgetown. This morning, we will transfer to the airport to connect with our international departures back home.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 15;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings during the tour;
- All ground transportation;
- Activities as mentioned in the itinerary;
- All national park and other reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

This excludes:

- Visa fees and **ANY** flights (see above);
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters, restaurants etc) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Please Note:

- Guyana is generally very hot and humid. On most mornings we will be up and out very early to take advantage of the cooler temperatures and wildlife activity.
- This Guyana tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health as some of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- The vehicles we use are sometimes open topped and time will be spent standing or sitting in the back where we can get a better view of the surrounding forest. We should expect some bumpy roads depending upon local road conditions; this is especially important during our drive to Karassabai.
- Accommodation is generally simple but comfortable throughout the tour, although air conditioning is not available. Mosquito nets are provided throughout the tour. Electricity is available at most sites.
- Biting insects can be abundant and include mosquitos, gnats ('no see ums') and biting flies. The risk of malaria is low.
- The species mentioned in this itinerary have all been recorded on previous Rockjumper tours, but climatic factors play a huge role in the species composition each year regard.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The main tour will depart from Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Georgetown (IATA: GEO) on day 1. As this is scheduled as an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time you wish. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 15 at Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Georgetown (IATA: GEO).

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Georgetown (IATA: GEO) is the primary port of entry for international flights into Guyana and is best serviced by Delta or Caribbean Airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**