

# GUYANA

7th – 23rd March 2005

## NATURETREK TOUR REPORT

**TOUR LEADER &  
ORNITHOLOGIST:**

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**PARTICIPANTS:**

Geoff Kirk (Leics)  
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Peter Clarke (S. Yorks)  
John Cue (London)  
Allen Ceeley (Hants)

## Tour Itinerary

- 7<sup>th</sup> March Depart Heathrow, London late morning (1105); arrive Barbados (1550); depart Barbados 1915 for Guyana (via Trinidad); arrive Guyana 2205; overnight Cara Lodge Hotel, Georgetown.
- 8<sup>th</sup> March Transfer to Ogle Airstrip, Georgetown for a flight to Kaieteur Falls; return flight to Cheddi Jagan International Airport; transfer by bus to Prairie Wharf on the Demerara River; transfer by boat up the Demerara River, up the Kamuni Creek and finally the Pokero Creek to the Timberhead Rain Forest Resort, our overnight accommodation.
- 9<sup>th</sup> March Exploring a wide variety of habitats and an optional visit to a nearby Amerindian community, overnight Timberhead.
- 10<sup>th</sup> March Early am further exploration of the forest before transferring by boat along the narrow creeks and up the Demerara River to Sandhills; transfer to 4x4 vehicles and our onward journey overland to Shanklands; overnight Shanklands Rain Forest Resort.
- 11<sup>th</sup> March Exploring forest habitats; overnight Shanklands.
- 12<sup>th</sup> March Depart Shanklands early am by boat down the Essequibo River disembarking at Shairaj Wharf; transfer by bus to Georgetown, via the floating bridge across the Demerara River; fly from Ogle Airstrip to the remote Rupununi savannahs; transfer by 4x4 vehicles to Karanambu; pm exploration of the rivers, lakes, etc; overnight Karanambu Ranch.
- 13<sup>th</sup> March Exploring a wide range of habitats; overnight Karanambu.
- 14<sup>th</sup> March Further exploration of Karanambu am, followed by overland transfer by 4x4 vehicles (picnic lunch stop) to Rock View Lodge; overnight Rock View Lodge.
- 15<sup>th</sup> March Early morning exploration of the Rock View nature trail; after breakfast exploration of the savannah/forest boundary and birding the roadside rainforest edge; pm further exploration of the roadside forest edge followed by evening in the Rupununi savannahs; overnight Rock View Lodge.
- 16<sup>th</sup> March Pre-dawn departure for the canopy walkway; early am the Iwokrama Forest canopy walkway (and breakfast); transfer to the Iwokrama Field Station (lunch); pm exploration of the nearby forest trails; overnight Iwokrama Field Station.
- 17<sup>th</sup> March Early am departure down the Essequibo River, followed by hike up Turtle Mountain through primary rainforest. Afternoon further exploration of the Iwokrama Field Station, followed by boat trip to rapids and return via the Essequibo River to the Field Station. Overnight Iwokrama Field Station.
- 18<sup>th</sup> March Early morning birding at the Iwokrama Field Station; followed by transfer by 4x4 vehicles to Muri scrub forest and onto trail through primary rainforest to a Guianan Cock of the Rock lek site. On to the Amerindian community of Surama. Afternoon exploration of the Surama savannahs and rainforest. Overnight Surama village.
- 19<sup>th</sup> March Exploration of the Surama savannahs and rainforest followed by canoeing down the Burro Burro River. Afternoon tour of Surama village, meeting village councillors, etc., followed by exploration of the Surama Mountain trails. Overnight Surama village.
- 20<sup>th</sup> March Pre-dawn walk to Burro Burro River (and breakfast), followed by canoeing down the Burro Burro River. Afternoon walk through savannahs and seasonally flooded forests to the Surama lakes. Overnight Surama village.
- 21<sup>st</sup> March Early am exploration of the Surama savannahs and rainforest before transferring by 4x4 vehicles to Rock View Lodge (lunch), prior to our return flight to Georgetown. Arrival at Ogle Airstrip early pm; followed by transfer to the Pegasus Hotel. Late

pm excursion to the Botanic Gardens, Georgetown. Overnight Le Meridien Pegasus.

22<sup>nd</sup> March Early am birding along the seafront and intertidal areas. City tour to see Georgetown's extraordinary wooden architecture and shopping in the markets and craft shops, plus a further visit to the Botanic Gardens. Transfer to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport and our onward flight to the UK via Trinidad and St Lucia.

23<sup>rd</sup> March Arrival at Heathrow, London at 0915.

## Introduction

Guyana lies at the point where the Caribbean meets South America on its North Atlantic seaboard, an almost unknown, but wonderful land of unspoilt natural beauty. It is known as 'the land of many waters' and is indeed a land of great rivers, streams and waterfalls, and much, much more. A land of 83,000 square miles, where over 80% consists of rainforest, where much has still to be explored, where rivers are uncharted and mountains yet to be climbed.

Guyana is truly a timeless paradise, a land of immense biodiversity, huge landscapes and unspoilt wonder, where Jaguar still roam the forests, where Giant River Otter, Black Caiman and Arapaima (the world's largest fish) still swim in the rivers, and where well over 700 species of birds including Harpy Eagle and Guianan Cock of the Rock can be found.

This was the first Naturetrek tour to Guyana, with Colin having visited the country exactly one year previously as part of the preparation for what will hopefully be a regular Naturetrek tour destination.

This was primarily a bird watching tour, but with some major opportunities to see some truly rare and stunning species of neotropical mammals, as well as a wide variety of amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates, and a 'mind-boggling' list of botanical highlights.

Our tour was an astounding success. We recorded a remarkable 337 species of birds (331 seen and 6 heard only). Highlights are too numerous to mention, but prolonged views of an adult Harpy Eagle down to a distance of only 30 metres was unprecedented, and displaying male Guianan Cock of the Rocks unforgettable.

Mammal watching, never easy in the neotropics, was likewise a great success with a total of 18 species recorded, and of course our unbelievable views of Giant River Otters on the Burro Burro River and the 'enormous' Giant Anteater in the Rupununi savannahs carrying a youngster on it's back.

A truly wonderful tour and a remarkable destination.

## Daily Itinerary and Species Recorded

**Day 1 Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**London/Bridgetown, Barbados/Port of Spain, Trinidad/Georgetown, Guyana**

We departed Heathrow, London on time on our British West Indian flight to Bridgetown, Barbados, where we remained 'in transit' in the departure lounge awaiting our onward flight to Guyana, via Trinidad. Not much scope for birding but Carib Grackles and Cattle Egrets kept us entertained as we chatted amongst ourselves, and got to know each other. After meeting up with Geoff and Lin who arrived on a different flight, we embarked on our onward flight. On our arrival at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport in Guyana, we were met by our transfer and driven the 26 miles to Georgetown and our very welcoming and comfortable accommodation for the night. After a briefing, beers and sandwiches, we were all ready for our beds. Overnight Cara Lodge, Georgetown.

**Birds recorded at Bridgetown, Barbados:**

Cattle Egret (1), Carib Grackle (2).

**Day 2 Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**Georgetown/Kaieteur Falls/  
Timberhead Rainforest Resort**

After a good nights rest and a hearty breakfast, we enjoyed some introductory Guyanan birding in the grounds of our hotel. The Cara Lodge, originally built in the 1840's, is one of the oldest wooden buildings in Georgetown and is very picturesque. Over the years it has hosted many dignitaries including Edward VII who planted a Sapodilla tree in the garden to mark the occasion. More recently it has hosted the England cricket team! Our first neotropical birds were a delight, even in the urban environment of Georgetown, and the Sapodilla tree was healthy and fruiting. Finally, at 0830, we were ready for our transfer to the nearby Ogle Airstrip for our flight to the legendary Kaieteur Falls.

**Birds recorded around the Cara Lodge Hotel, Georgetown:**

Ruddy Ground-Dove (1), Red-shouldered Macaw (1), Plain-bellied Emerald (1), Yellow-bellied Elaenia (1), Great Kiskadee (2), Tropical Kingbird (1), Grey Kingbird (2), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (2), Grey-breasted Martin (8), House Wren (1), Pale-breasted Thrush (4), Tropical Mockingbird (2), Palm Tanager (3), Blue-black Grassquit (2), Carib Grackle (3).

As we drove through Georgetown we noted that much of the land is located below sea level (-2m at high tide!). This necessitates a huge length of sea wall and an elaborate system of drainage canals and sluice gates to drain water at low tide, all of which provides a wealth of habitat for water birds. Arriving at Ogle we took the opportunity to do some birding as our two small planes were prepared for our epic journey.

**Birds recorded en route to and around the Ogle Airstrip, Georgetown:**

Brown Pelican (3), Tricoloured Heron (1), Cattle Egret (26), Striated Heron (1), Snail Kite (1), Southern Lapwing (1), Wattled Jacana (2), Eared Dove (1), Great Kiskadee (2), Grey-breasted Martin (10), House Wren (1), Tropical Mockingbird (2), Blue-grey Tanager (4), Red-breasted Blackbird (2).

As we became airborne, circling over the coastal plain, we were treated to stunning views of Georgetown, a patch of rice paddies and a seemingly endless grid system of sugar cane plantations. Three Brown Pelicans were glimpsed as they flew over the sea (our only ones of the trip!) and as we turned inland, we commenced our long flight into the interior. As we gained height the agricultural areas were soon replaced by wetlands and forest, and in no time at all we were flying over a vast expanse of uninterrupted rainforest, which stretched to the horizons in an endless sea of green. The meandering rivers and numerous ox-bow lakes highlighted why Guyana is known as the land of many waters, but as we journeyed far inland, the terrain became more undulated, giving way to hills, plateaux and towering tepuis. As we followed the white waters of the Potaro River, which are bordered by 2000ft cliffs, we glimpsed Red and Green Macaws below us, before being confronted by the awesome sight of the magnificent, towering Kaieteur Falls.

With expert skill, our pilots circled the splendour below us, which can only be described as a miracle of nature, with the white water plummeting a massive 750ft in a sheer drop over a precipice of 822ft (5 times the height of Niagara Falls!). As we circled the plateau, a small open area in the forest revealed a tiny landing strip, and with even greater expertise our pilots deftly landed us on the plateau above the falls. As we disembarked, we were overcome with a feeling of complete isolation, and were confronted by almost elphin like forest, and amongst the stunted trees, towered the giant terrestrial Tank Bromeliads.

With building excitement, we embarked along a narrow trail conscious of the unique biodiversity. We glimpsed a Red-shouldered Tanager as a pair of raucous Scarlet Macaws flew low over our heads, and as we entered the moss covered trees, we were treated to a true icon of beauty, a stunning male Guianan Cock of the Rock. With patience we experienced superb views of this gorgeous cotinga, with its bright orange plumage and fan-like crest. With one of our target birds of the tour seen down to a few metres, we were able to turn our attentions to the spectacle of the falls themselves. From a series of view points we were able to appreciate the full grandeur and magnitude of Kaieteur, and as we watched the sheer mass of water as it thundered over the precipice into the green semi-circular chasm, the clouds of spray created a permanent rainbow in the bright sunshine.

Some examination of the Tank Bromeliads revealed the tiny Golden Frog, which spends its entire life within this spectacular plant. Swifts screamed overhead and down below us as they circled the bowl of the chasm. Both White-tipped and the rare White-chinned Swift were seen well, before a predatory Bat Falcon gave chase, and a Cliff Flycatcher was watched as it sallied for insects from its precarious perch on the canyon wall.

However, the best was yet to come. As we reluctantly left our vantage point above the falls, we encountered a lek (communal display area) of Guianan Cock of the Rocks in the adjacent forest. At least two adult males were in full display providing superb photographic opportunities and as we watched, an immature male was observed to join the action, and at least one female was drawn, irresistibly, to the display.

As we ate our picnic lunch before re-boarding our planes, we couldn't believe that our allocated two-hour tour of Kaieteur had stretched to over four!

**Birds recorded at the Kaieteur Falls:**

Bat Falcon (1), Greater Yellow-headed Vulture (5), Red and green Macaw (4), Scarlet Macaw (2), White-chinned Swift (2), White-tipped Swift (6), Glittering-throated Emerald (1), Swallow-winged Puffbird (1), Tropical Kingbird (1), Cliff Flycatcher (1), Guianan Cock of the Rock (5), Red-shouldered Tanager (1).

We departed on our return flight at 1400, and as we encountered rain, we realised how lucky we had been with the weather. We landed at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport, to be greeted by some baffled and bemused customs officials as we walked past the queues of passengers struggling to get through immigration!

A delay with our transfer meant that we were able to relax in the park outside the airport, enjoying some leisurely birding and an introduction to a rather nice five-year old El Dorado rum, an integral part of our picnic.

**Birds recorded outside the Cheddi Jagan International Airport:**

Black Vulture (2), Smooth-billed Ani (2), Great Kiskadee (1), Grey-breasted Martin (2), Tropical Mockingbird (2), Blue-grey Tanager (1), Turquoise Tanager (1).

Finally, we were able to transfer to Prairie Dock on the Demerara River, a little too late to enjoy the afternoon tea which awaited us. With our boat loaded with all our luggage, we were soon on our way up the mighty Demerara, before following the Kamuni River, a smaller tributary. The latter was an absolute delight after the muddy brown waters of the Demerara and as we travelled up the narrow 'black waters' of the Pockerero Creek, the journey became quite magical with the mirror-like surface of the clear, but tanin stained waters reflecting the surrounding vegetation. As we entered the Amerindian Reserve, the habitat changed from forest to more open savannah and seasonally flooded swamp. Ringed Kingfishers and Greater Anis were abundant and as we journeyed into the setting sun, we were greeted with a panoramic scene of Moriche Palms silhouetted against the gorgeous colours of an unforgettable sunset.

Finally, in the fading light we arrived at the Timberhead Rainforest Resort and some very welcome cold beers. Even in the dark, the lodge was a very impressive sight, built in the traditional way, on stilts and with a palm thatched roof. It had been a truly wonderful day and it was hard to believe that it was only our first full day in Guyana! Overnight Timberhead Rainforest Resort.

**Birds recorded on the river journey to Timberhead:**

Neotropic Cormorant (2), Anhinga (1), Striated Heron (2), Black-crowned Night-Heron (3), Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture (1), Black Vulture (4), Plumbeous Kite (1), Yellow-headed Caracara (2), Plumbeous Pigeon (1), Red-shouldered Macaw (4), Squirrel Cuckoo (2), Greater Ani (7), Ringed Kingfisher (9), White-throated Toucan (1), Lesser Kiskadee (1), Southern rough-winged Swallow (4), Barn Swallow (3), Silver-beaked Tanager (5), Crested Oropendola (3).

**Day 3 Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005****Timberhead Rainforest Restort**

Timberhead is situated on the edge of the forest overlooking the river, and the surroundings offer a variety of habitats, including open grassy marsh and scattered stands of Moriche Palm and fairly tall sandbelt forest. There is an ample trail system and additionally there is the attractive option of birding by boat along the more peaceful stretches of water upstream.

Our day began at 0600 birding the open areas and forest edge around our accommodation. A stunning Crimson-crested Woodpecker perched prominently in a dead tree, while Neotropical Palm-Swifts flew overhead. A Black-spotted Barbet fed in a fruiting tree, as small flocks of Red-bellied Macaws perched in the Moriche Palms. A female Black-throated Mango perched in a treetop and provided excellent views in the scope, while both Blue-chinned Sapphire and Glittering-throated Emerald added to a frenzy of hummingbird activity.

After breakfast we ventured into the forest. Rainforest birding is always difficult, but can be very rewarding. Likewise, to see mammals requires both skill and patience, and moving quietly and slowly produces the best results. A small clearing yielded a stunning Black-eared Fairy and a Double-banded Pygmy-Tyrant was a challenge to identify, whilst a female Guianan Slaty Antshrike played hide and seek with us (with most of us winning!). A Chestnut-rumped Woodcreeper was stunning, but a swarm of marauding army ants irrupted into a frenzy of bird activity. Antbirds are a large and diverse family of neotropical birds. A small number of species follow army ants. The birds use the raiding ant swarms as beaters, capturing prey flushed by the ants which forage on or near the forest floor. Army ant swarms generally attract attendant antbirds and we were not to be disappointed, and a challenging but rewarding 20 minutes of birding followed.

As we pursued the swarm down a slope, we encountered Dusky-throated, Cinereous and Amazonian Antshrikes, as well as Long-winged Antwren, and a couple of species which got away! A Plain Xenops added to the diversity, but having accidentally disturbed a colony of social wasps, we had to beat a hasty retreat, and fortunately only our leader got stung!

Deep in the forest we encountered a lek of Golden-headed Manakins, the males stunning in their spectacular plumage. Finally, we arrived at the creek, where a boat was waiting for us to take us back to the lodge. Progress was slow as we stopped to birdwatch on the quiet waterway, with a pair of dueting Black-capped Donacobius being particularly memorable.

After lunch and a welcome rest, we embarked on further exploration of the forest and associated habitats. As we slowly walked along a winding trail, we encountered a delightful pair of White-vented Euphonias and a displaying male White-bearded Manakin was simply stunning.

An open clearing held an array of species. We watched a Grey-crowned Flatbill delicately constructing its nest, and a male Pink-throated Becard was an unbelievable splash of colour. A male Amazonian white-tailed Trogon perched openly, as a superb pair of White-throated Toucans sat high in a tree top with the male courtship feeding the female on brightly coloured fruits. An area of scrub held Fulvous-crested Tanager, Eastern Long-tailed Hermit and Buff-throated Saltator, as both Red-bellied and Red-shoulder Macaws perched in the canopy.

The alternative option of the boat trip to the nearby Amerindian village, was also entertaining and full of wildlife, with a flock of White-eyed Parakeets being particularly memorable.

After dinner we enjoyed a lively log call and spotlighting some Pauraques as they hawked for insects around the lodges. And for those who stayed up for an extra beer, a Common Opossum on its nocturnal foraging. Overnight Timberhead.

**Birds recorded at Timberhead:**

Striated Heron (1), Black Vulture (12), Turkey Vulture (1), Lesser yellow-headed Vulture (3), Yellow-headed Caracara (1), Pale-vented Pigeon (6), Plumbeous Pigeon (h), Common Ground-Dove (7), Ruddy Ground-Dove (1), White-tipped Dove (4), Red-bellied Macaw (14), Red-shouldered Macaw (9), White-eyed Parakeet (6), Brown-throated Parakeet (3), Orange-winged Parrot (3), Squirrel Cuckoo (2), Smooth-billed Ani (18), Pauraque (4), Neotropical Palm-Swift (6), Eastern Long-tailed Hermit (1), Black-throated Mango (1), Blue-chinned Sapphire (1), Glittering-throated Emerald (3), Black-eared Fairy (1), Amazon white-tailed Trogon (1), Ringed Kingfisher (6), Green Kingfisher (2), Swallow-winged Puffbird (5), Black-spotted Barbet (1), White-throated Toucan (3), Crimson-crested Woodpecker (2), Plain Xenops (1), Chestnut-rumped Woodcreeper (1), Guianan Slaty-Antshrike (1), Dusky-throated Antshrike (1), Mouse-coloured Antshrike (1), Amazonian Antshrike (1), Cinereous Antshrike (1), Long-winged Antwren (1), White-bearded Manakin (1), Golden-headed Manakin (3), Yellow-bellied Elaenia (1), Double-banded Pygmy-Tyrant (2), Common Tody-Flycatcher (1), Grey-crowned Flatbill (1), Dusky-capped Flycatcher (1), Short-crested Flycatcher (1), Great Kiskadee (2), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (2), Piratic Flycatcher (4), Tropical Kingbird (2), Pink-throated Becard (1), Black-tailed Tityra (1), Grey-breasted Martin (1), Black-capped Donacobius (3), House Wren (3), Pale-breasted Thrush (1), Bananaquit (2), Fulvous-crested Tanager (1), Silver-beaked Tanager (13), Blue-grey Tanager (4), Palm Tanager (6), Violaceous Euphonia (3), White-vented Euphonia (3), Turquoise Tanager (8), Blue Dacnis (2), Green Honeycreeper (1), Buff-throated Saltator (1), Moriche Oriole (3), Yellow-rumped Cacique (8).

**Mammals recorded:**

Common Opossum (1).

**Day 4 Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**Timberland/Shanklands**

We awoke to a pre-dawn chorus of Little Chachalacas, and embarked on some early morning birding of the forest clearing, followed by an optional venture into the forest. A stunning Blue-crowned Motmot was located on its perch, while a White-chested Emerald fed at a flowering tree, and a White-plumed Antbird was the highlight of the forest walk.

**Birds recorded early morning at Timberhead:**

Black Vulture (10), Lesser yellow-headed Vulture (6), Plumbeous Kite (1), Little Chachalaca (h), Common Ground-Dove (2), Red-bellied Macaw (3), Orange-winged Parrot (10), Smooth-billed Ani (7), Neotropical Palm-Swift (4), Eastern Long-tailed Hermit (1), Black-throated Mango (1), White-chested Emerald (1), White-tailed Trogon (1), Green Kingfisher (1), Blue-crowned Motmot (1), White-throated Toucan (1), White-plumed Antbird (1), Cinereous Antshrike (1), Short-crested Flycatcher (1), Great Kiskadee (2), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (9), Piratic Flycatcher (1), House Wren (2), Pale-vented Thrush (2), Blue-grey Tanager (2), Palm Tanager (8), Blue Dacnis (2).

After breakfast with our bags packed and loaded onto our boat, we said our goodbyes and embarked on the next leg of our tour. As we retraced our way down the Pokerero Creek and via the Kamuni River to the mighty Demerara, we paused to admire Laughing Falcon as it perched in a huge tree laden with Bromeliads.

We travelled up the Demerara River as far as the small Amerindian village of Sandhills where our 4x4 vehicles were waiting to transfer to the Shanklands Rainforest Resort on a journey westwards through six miles of lower sandbelt forest and 19 miles of tall tropical rainforest.

**Birds recorded on river journey between Timberhead and Sandhills:**

Neotropical Cormorant (1), Anhinga (1), Cattle Egret (1), Striated Heron (1), Black Vulture (10), Lesser yellow-headed Vulture (1), Plumbeous Kite (1), Laughing Falcon (1), Pale-vented Pigeon (1), Greater Ani (14), Ringed Kingfisher (1), Tropical Kingbird (5), Great Kiskadee (2), Lesser Kiskadee (1), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (4), Grey-breasted Martin (4), White-winged Swallow (1), Red-capped Cardinal (1).

Our arrival at Sandhills was greeted by one small problem, a short section of shifting sand on the slope uphill from the jetty en route to the village. While the smaller vehicle made it ok, the larger vehicle laden with our luggage failed repeatedly to make it to the top. Finally, as we watched a flock of Cayenne Jays and a Channel-billed Toucan, a tractor towed our vehicle to the top of the slope and we were able to embark on our adventurous journey, much to the amusement of the local inhabitants.

Our delay meant that time was rather short, but as we journeyed through the tall forest, we listened to the sound of Screaming Pihas, flushing Blackish Nightjars from their daytime roosts on the track which now resembled the bed of a river, complete with ruts and potholes in which a normal sized car could disappear!

**Birds recorded at Sandhills and overland journey to Shanklands:**

Blackish Nightjar (4), Channel-billed Toucan (1), Screaming Piha (h), Cayenne Jay (3).

Shanklands is a delightful location, set on a majestic cliff overlooking Guyana's largest river, the Essequibo. White colonial style cottages are set amidst 25 acres of rolling lawns with views of the Essequibo and Mazaruni rivers. After settling in and an excellent lunch, we embarked on some leisurely exploration of the grounds and forest edge. Both Lineated and Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers were seen well and a Black Caracara flew over our heads. A Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet was seen down to every detail as both Blackpoll and Yellow Warblers fed high in the canopy. A Spotted Tanager was a delight and a perched Roadside Hawk being mobbed by two Tropical Mockingbirds provided a mesmerising spectacle. Three Little Chachalacas and a spectacular sunset, complete with hunting Bat Falcon, provided a special finale to a wonderful day. Overnight Shanklands.

**Birds recorded at Shanklands:**

Black-crowned Night-Heron (1), Roadside Hawk (1), Plumbeous Kite (1), Black Caracara (1), Yellow-headed Caracara (2), Bat Falcon (1), Little Chachalaca (3), Southern Lapwing (2), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Large-billed Tern (1), Pale-vented Pigeon (2), Red-bellied Macaw (10), Orange-winged Parrot (6), Red-shouldered Macaw (2), Amazonian white-tailed Trogon (1), Swallow-winged Puffbird (1), Black-spotted Barbet (1), White-throated Toucan (3), Lineated Woodpecker (1), Yellow-tufted Woodpecker (2), Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet (1), Lesser Elaenia (1), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (2), Lesser Kiskadee (1), Piratic Flycatcher (1), White-winged Swallow (2), Tropical Mockingbird (4), Blackpoll Warbler (1), Yellow Warbler (1), Silver-beaked Tanager (4), Blue-grey Tanager (2), Palm Tanager (4), Spotted Tanager (1), Blue Dacnis (1), Shiny Cowbird (2), Yellow-rumped Cacique (30), Red-rumped Cacique (10).

## Day 5 Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005

## Shanklands

Some early morning birding of the Shanklands grounds and forest edge from 0600 produced a wealth of species, with the highlight being the mixed colony of Yellow-rumped and Red-rumped Caciques, and a brief sortie into the forest produced a Long-billed Gnatwren.

After breakfast we embarked on some more serious explorations of the forest trails in the company of our local guide Leonard. Birds were soon ignored as we watched a Red-rumped Agouti and at least three Red Howler Monkeys as they stared down at us from the canopy. A mixed canopy feeding flock contained a Flame-crested Tanager and a Red-necked Woodpecker was superb. A troupe of Guianan Sakis were heard but not seen, but a Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant and a Black-eared Fairy were seen down to a few feet.

After an excellent lunch which included cottage pie and apple crumble, we watched a Black-necked Aracari as it predated eggs and chicks in the cacique colony, and enjoyed some unique photo opportunities of Blackish Nightjars, before embarking on our afternoon excursion.

We drove a short distance to an area of sandbelt forest which is sporadically used as a military range! We walked along a muddy track examining the fresh footprints of a female Jaguar and its cub. Nearby a pair of Paradise Jacamars perched in a dead tree and a small feeding flock held both Red-legged and Purple

Honeycreepers. A Yellow-throated Flycatcher (now split from White-ringed Flycatcher) perched in a treetop, and nearby sat a Black-crowned Tityra. A Yellow-tailed Snake was seen in the open before 'vanishing' into the vegetation. Further on we watched two Swallow-tailed Kites as they effortlessly soared low over the canopy, like all kites, true birds of the air. However, even the kites were eclipsed as a pair of very vocal Red-fan Parrots flew in and landed for all to see. Green Oropendolas and a pair of elusive Coraya Wrens completed what had been a fabulous day. Overnight Shanklands.

**Birds recorded at Shanklands:**

Greater yellow-headed Vulture (1), Plumbeous Kite (1), Swallow-tailed Kite (2), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Pale-vented Pigeon (2), White-tipped Dove (1), Scaled Pigeon (h), Red-shouldered Macaw (4), Orange-winged Parrot (30), Red-fan Parrot (2), Squirrel Cuckoo (1), Blackish Nightjar (2), Band-rumped Swift (5), Grey-rumped Swift (1), Blue-chinned Sapphire (1), Black-eared Fairy (1), Amazonian white-tailed Trogon (1), Paradise Jacamar (2), Swallow-winged Puffbird (4), Black-necked Aracari (2), White-throated Toucan (1), Lineated Woodpecker (2), Red-necked Woodpecker (2), Yellow-bellied Elaenia (1), Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet (1), Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant (1), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (4), Yellow-throated Flycatcher (1), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (1), Common Tody-Flycatcher (1), Screaming Piha (h), Black-crowned Tityra (1), Golden-headed Manakin (2), Grey-breasted Martin (2), Coraya Wren (2), House Wren (1), Long-billed Gnatwren (1), Tropical Mockingbird (2), Flame-crested Tanager (1), Silver-beaked Tanager (10), Blue-grey Tanager (4), Palm Tanager (15), Turquoise Tanager (1), Blue Dacnis (1), Green Honeycreeper (2), Red-legged Honeycreeper (3), Purple Honeycreeper (2), Buff-throated Saltator (1), Giant Cowbird (1), Yellow-rumped Cacique (40), Red-rumped Cacique (6), Crested Oropendola (h), Green Oropendola (3).

**Mammals recorded:**

Red-rumped Agouti (1), Red Howler Monkey (3), Guianan Saki (h), Jaguar (fresh footprints only).

**Reptiles:**

Yellow-tailed Snake

**Day 6 Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**Shanklands/Karanambu**

Up at 0500 with breakfast at 0530, there was only a little time for some final birding at Shanklands before our departure.

**Birds recorded early morning at Shanklands:**

Spotted Sandpiper (2), Pauraque (h), Orange-winged Parrot (4), White-winged Swallow (2), Pale-breasted Thrush (1).

In no time at all we had boarded the very fast twin-engined Shanklands boat and with the wind in our hair we were 'zooming' down the huge Essequibo River, an even mightier expanse of surging brown water than the Demerara.

**Birds recorded on early morning boat journey down the Essequibo River to Shairaj Wharf:**

Snowy Egret (1), Plumbeous Kite (2), Large-billed Tern (13), Pale-vented Pigeon (3), Red-bellied Macaw (4), Orange-winged Amazon (2).

Our destination was Shairaj Wharf at Parika situated at the river mouth, and it is hard to believe that the Essequibo is 21 miles wide at this point! Disembarking, we arrived to find our transfer bus waiting for us and in no time at all we were weaving our way through the Saturday morning traffic, through the scattered communities. Many of the villages had colourful markets and as we dodged horses, cows and even pigs, all of which appeared oblivious to the traffic, we made good time after some earlier hold-ups. Finally we arrived at the Demerara River where the worlds longest floating bridge facilitates access to Georgetown on

the other side. A brief delay before crossing produced some good birds including a Common Black Hawk and Little Blue Heron, and on the other side a superb adult Scarlet Ibis fed in the roadside mudflats.

Eventually, we arrived at the Ogle Airstrip at 0915 in plenty of time for our 0930 check in and after being weighed and some fun in immigration, we boarded our twelve-seater aircraft for our onward flight into the interior.

**Birds recorded overland from Shairaj Wharf to Ogle Airstrip, Georgetown:**

Snowy Egret (3), Little Blue Heron (1), Tricoloured Heron (1), Cattle Egret (9), Striated Heron (1), Scarlet Ibis (1), Common Black Hawk (1), Roadside Hawk (2), Snail Kite (6), Pale-vented Pigeon (1), Rock Pigeon (4), Ruddy Ground-Dove (1), Southern beardless Tyrannulet (1), White-headed Marsh-Tyrant (1), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (4), Tropical Mockingbird (6), Grey-breasted Martin (8), Blue-grey Tanager (2), Red-capped Cardinal (1), Red-breasted Blackbird (2), Shiny Cowbird (35), Carib Grackle (10).

Our flight in our 12-seater Islander was memorable to say the least. After flying above seemingly endless rainforest, the terrain dramatically gave way to rolling savannah, sliced by rivers and broken by hills rising suddenly from the plain. This is the Rupununi savannah, a vast land of far horizons and sun scorched plains, interrupted by patches of scrub and riparian woodland, swamps and lakes, together with a scattering of Amerindian villages and cattle ranches.

As our pilot circled, we were treated to awesome panoramic views of this true wilderness, before expertly touching down on a tiny 'dirt' airstrip with not a building in sight. As we disembarked we were greeted with a blast of heat, total silence and an amazing feeling of isolation.

The land in every direction is part of Karanambu, a cattle ranch comprising of some 125 square miles, but supporting only 500 head of cattle! We were met by Edward McTurk, who manages Karanambu, and two 4x4 vehicles quickly transported us to our rustic, but charming accommodation.

Karanambu is also home to Diane McTurk (Edward's aunt) who is famous for her work with rehabilitating orphaned Giant River Otters to the wild. We arrived to be met by a smiling Diane and trays of glasses containing chilled rum punch, the traditional Karanambu greeting!

After settling in, we enjoyed a splendid lunch in the company of Diane, Edward and Melanie (Edward's wife) before taking the opportunity to see the three orphaned Giant River Otters which are currently part of Diane's rehabilitation programme. It was a wonderful experience to see the otters fed and cared for with such devotion, and to walk with them the several hundred metres to the river where we could see them enjoying their true environment.

Once the afternoon heat had begun to subside, we watched a Jabiru soaring low over our heads before embarking on a boat journey up the Rupununi River. This is a wonderful way to see the wildlife of the Rupununi and as we slowly travelled along the narrow, winding waterway, we watched a perched Savannah Hawk as two Jabirus soared high overhead. Plain-breasted Ground-Doves drank at the waters edge as a Sunbittern and a pair of Green Ibis fed on a shady beach. Stunning Amazon Kingfishers were a delight as they flew jewel-like over the water, as sinister Black Caiman cruised in search of prey.

We took the opportunity to land and walk to a small lake known as Crane Pond, a famous location for water birds. The winding trail took us through patches of scrub woodland and grassy savannah, but progress was slow as we encountered birds, birds and more birds. On disembarking, we flushed a pair of Little Chachalacas, and as we stood at the forest edge, pairs of Black-crested Antshrike and Southern White-fringed Antwrens gleaned for insects. A Green-tailed Jacamar perched obligingly as a tiny Tropical Gnatcatcher fed nearby. As we entered the woodland a Spotted Puffbird (new for the leader!) sat only 15ft from us providing wonderful photo opportunities for those with cameras, and for those who didn't wishing they had! A male White-browed Antbird was glimpsed as it crossed our path and as we entered an open area, we watched a pair of Boat-billed Flycatchers, before being distracted by two Pale-breasted Spinetails. An Undulated Tinamou with a small chick darted along our path and vanished into the scrub, before we came across the predated nest of a Black Caiman, a reminder that even the top predators have predators.

At Crane Pond there was a spectacle to behold, as we watched our first Muscovy Ducks, White-faced and Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and an array of egrets and herons. A predatory Zone-tailed Hawk, whose flight deceptively mimics the non-predatory Turkey Vulture, flew over our heads, as a pair of Yellow-chinned Spinetails and a White-tailed Goldenthrout fed in the emergent vegetation, and amongst the blanket of enormous leaf pads of the *Victoria amazonica*, Guyana's national flower, strutted American Purple Gallinules and Wattled Jacanas. We stayed as long as possible admiring the wildlife and gorgeous colours in the late afternoon sun, only leaving when the light began to fade.

We arrived back at the river to watch a flock of Black Skimmers as we re-boarded our boats, and in the fading light, a Band-tailed Nighthawk on its nocturnal foragings. And, as we drifted silently down stream in the fading light, we sipped chilled drinks as we listened to the sounds of the night animals begin to awaken. Black Caiman were very numerous as huge Bull Dog Bats flew low over the water as they foraged for either insects or fish (Lesser Bull Dog Bats eat insects, whilst Greater Bull Dog Bats eat fish). Amazon Green Frogs croaked loudly, and as we dreamed of seeing Jaguar drinking at the waters edge, we came across a group of three large Capybaras, a wonderful sight as they lounged on a sandbank oblivious to our spotlights. All in all it had been an incredible day and after refreshing showers and reviving glasses of chilled rum punch, we sat down to a sumptuous dinner and more entertaining tales of life in the Rupununi. Overnight Karanambu Ranch.

**Birds recorded at Karanambu:**

Undulated Tinamou (2), Neotropical Cormorant (2), White-faced Whistling-Duck (25), Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (6), Muscovy Duck (5), Cocoi Heron (4), Great Egret (1), Snowy Egret (2), Striated Heron (10), Black-crowned Nigh-Heron (1), Green Ibis (2), Wood Stork (3), Jabiru (4), Black Vulture (10), Turkey Vulture (25), Savannah Hawk (1), Zone-tailed Hawk (2), White-tailed Hawk (1), Yellow-headed Caracara (2), Little Chachalaca (2), American Purple Gallinule (7), Sunbittern (1), Southern Lapwing (2), Spotted Sandpiper (3), Wattled Jacana (15), Black Skimmer (8), Pale-vented Pigeon (1), Common Ground-Dove (1), Plain-breasted Ground-Dove (4), Blue Ground-Dove (1), Band-tailed Nighthawk (1), Striped Cuckoo (h), White-tailed Goldenthrout (1), Glittering-throated Emerald (1), Ringed Kingfisher (1), Amazon Kingfisher (1), Green Kingfisher (1), Green-tailed Jacamar (1), Spotted Puffbird (1), Swallow-winged Puffbird (1), Yellow-chinned Spinetail (2), Pale-breasted Spinetail (2), Black-crested Antshrike (2), Southern white-fringed Antwren (2), White-browed Antbird (1), Plain-crested Elaenia (1), Pied Water-Tyrant (2), White-headed Marsh-Tyrant (1), Tropical Kingbird (4), Great Kiskadee (2), Lesser Kiskadee (11), Boat-billed Flycatcher (2), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (2), White-winged Swallow (1), Southern Rough-winged Swallow (1), Tropical Gnatchatcher (1), Silver-beaked Tanager (4), Blue-grey Tanager (2), Red-capped Cardinal (8), Ruddy-breasted Seedeater (4), Grey Seedeater (6), Yellow Oriole (10), Yellow-rumped Cacique (5), Crested Oropendola (2).

**Mammals recorded:**

Giant River Otter (3 Diane's rehabilitated animals only), Capybara (3), Bull Dog Bat spp (25+).

**Reptiles and Amphibians recorded:**

Black Caiman (50+), Green Iguana (2), Amazon Green Frog (h).

**Day 7 Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**Karanambu**

After a night of torrential rain, we awoke to find it still pelting down. On the plus side, we were able to linger over our delicious breakfast and extra freshly ground coffee. The rain had resulted in an inevitable delay to our morning programme, but as we stood in the shelter of the veranda, we watched a flock of 'bedraggled' Yellow-headed Parrots perched in a nearby tree, our first for the trip!

With the rain almost over, a short walk revealed several foraging groups of Crested Bobwhites and a pair of Burnished-buff Tanagers. However, by 0845, the rain had largely stopped and we were ready to embark on our morning excursion, a long walk to the Honey Ponds.

As we walked across the savannah, a patch of scrub revealed a pair of Finsch's Euphonias and a Plain-crested Elaenia, and as we entered an area of forest, both male and female Blue-backed Manakins were eventually seen well. Several Red-eyed Vireos were present, and a stunning Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant was seen down to a few feet. A feeding flock held a pair of arboreal Pygmy Antwrens, and a pair of Amazonian White-tailed Trogons were simply stunning, but best of all was a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl that we successfully 'called-in' to a few metres of where we stood!

As we approached our destination, two Lesser Nighthawks were located at their daytime roosts and nearby on the trunk of a tree, a roost of at least 10 Sac-winged Bats spp. A Solitary Sandpiper fed at the waters edge

and both Great Black and Black-collared Hawks perched in overhanging trees. The Honey Ponds are a delightful location and home to herons, egrets, kingfishers and of course the Arapaima, the world's largest freshwater fish, although all we saw were some scales on the bank! Giant River Otters also frequent the ponds, and we were unfortunate not to see them. In the adjacent woodland, we located a Streaked Flycatcher, before taking a winding trail through an area of dense forest on our return journey. Both Amazonian Antshrike and Yellow-olive Flycatcher were seen well, but the nearest we got to Brazilian Tapir was inspecting a pile of dung!

After lunch we watched a flock of 23 Red-capped Cardinals in a Mango tree, where a pair of Glittering-throated Emeralds were coming to a strategically placed hummingbird feeder. At 1500 hrs it was time to embark on our boat trip down the Rupununi River, however, no sooner had we departed when the heavens opened-up and we had first hand experience of a tropical downpour. A flock of 22 Muscovy Ducks livened us up, and once the rain had stopped a fishing Osprey and a pair of Pied Plovers on a sandbank were seen well. A flock of 10 Black Skimmers were stunning and after travelling several miles, we disembarked on a walk to Buffalo Pond. A Striped Woodcreeper was glimpsed, as a huge Green Iguana sat in a tree, and in the nearby savannah a Hooded Tanager was encountered. As we circled the pond a very vocal Striped Cuckoo was watched as it sang from its perch, and a feeding flock held a pair of Ashy-headed Greenlets and a Pale-tipped Inezia. Two Mouse-coloured Tyrannulets were seen well but both Undulated Tinamou and Collared Forest-Falcon were just a distant noise.

Back in our boats, we travelled further down river before journeying up the Sumuma Creek, a small tributary of the main river. We watched a juvenile Rufescent Tiger-Heron, with its tiger-barred plumage making it almost invisible amongst the riverside vegetation. A large dead Black Caiman with a huge arrow protruding from one eye, was a sobering reminder that not everyone appreciated the wildlife in the Rupununi. A flock of Short-tailed Swifts skimmed the treetops as we watched a troupe of Squirrel Monkeys and a Sunbittern skulked at the waters edge. And, as we returned to the main river we spotted a Spotted Puffbird at its riverside perch, although it was only a silhouette in the fading light. As we rejoined the main river we encountered three Black Skimmers in the twilight and watched them actively 'skimming', a memorable sight. Numerous Band-tailed Nighthawks magically appeared in the fading light, and as we journeyed back up river, our spotlights revealed at least three Boat-billed Herons on their nocturnal foragings, a single Pauraque and an arboreal Amazon Tree-Boa.

After dinner and our log call, which revealed a total of 100 species of birds for our day list, we took our torches and went spot-lighting on the nearby Karanambu ranch private airstrip and found four Pauraques and a superb Least Nighthawk, which remained motionless at our feet!

#### **Birds recorded at Karanambu:**

Undulated Tinamou (h), Neotropical Cormorant (11), Anhinga (1), Muscovy Duck (30), Rufescent Tiger-Heron (1), Cocoi Heron (9), Great Egret (3), Snowy Egret (1), Little Blue Heron (3), Striated Heron (2), Boat-billed Heron (3), Green Ibis (3), Woodstork (1), Black Vulture (10), Turkey Vulture (15), Osprey (1), Plumbeous Kite (1), Savannah Hawk (4), Black-collared Hawk (4), Great Black Hawk (1), White-tailed Hawk (1), Yellow-headed Caracara (1), Collared Forest Falcon (h), Crested Bobwhite (9), Little Chachalaca (1), Sunbittern (1), Pied Lapwing (2), Wattled Jacana (40), Southern Lapwing (4), Solitary Sandpiper (1), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Black Skimmer (13), Pale-vented Pigeon (3), Common Ground-Dove (4), White-tipped Dove (2), Yellow-headed Parrot (5), Orange-winged Parrot (1), Brown-throated Parakeet (4), Smooth-billed Ani (20), Striped Cuckoo (1), Least Nighthawk (1), Lesser Nighthawk (2), Band-tailed Nighthawk (19), Pauraque (5), Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (1), Short-tailed Swift (5), Glittering-throated Emerald (2), Blue-chinned Sapphire (1), Amazonian White-tailed Trogon (2), Ringed Kingfisher (2), Amazon Kingfisher (5), Green Kingfisher (3), Green-tailed Jacamar (1), Spotted Puffbird (1), Swallow-winged Puffbird (6), Buff-throated Woodcreeper (1), Striped Woodcreeper (1), Black-crested Antshrike (2), Guianan Slaty Antshrike (h), Amazonian Antshrike (1), Barred Antshrike (h), Southern white-fringed Antwren (2), White-bellied Antbird (h), Pygmy Antwren (2), Southern beardless Tyrannulet (1), Plain-crested Elaenia (1), Small-billed Elaenia (1), Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant (1), Common Tody-Flycatcher (2), Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet (2), Pied Water Tyrant (2), Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant (h), White-headed Marsh-Tyrant (1), Pale-tipped Inezia (Tyrannulet) (1), Yellow-olive Flycatcher (2), Great Kiskadee (7), Lesser Kiskadee (7), Boat-billed Flycatcher (1), Tropical Kingbird (4), Streaked Flycatcher (1), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (2), Screaming Piha (h), Capuchinbird (h), Blue-backed Manakin (3), Red-eyed Vireo (4), Ashy-headed Greenlet (2), Grey-breasted Martin (2), White-winged Swallow (6), Pale-breasted Thrush (1), Hooded Tanager (3), Silver-beaked Tanager (1), Blue-grey Tanager (6), Palm Tanager (1), Finsch's Euphonia (1), Burnished-buff Tanager (3), Red-legged Honeycreeper (h), Red-capped Cardinal (25), Yellow Oriole (1), Yellow-rumped Cacique (2), Crested Oropendola (2).

**Mammals recorded:**

Brazilian Tapir (dung only), Sac-winged Bat spp. (10+), Squirrel Monkey (6+), Bull Dog Bat spp. (20+).

**Reptiles recorded:**

Green Iguana (1), Amazon Tree-Boa (1), Black Caiman (50+).

**Day 8 Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2005****Karanambu/Rock View**

A pre-dawn start with hot drinks, before our departure out into the savannahs in the 4x4 vehicles, in search of the elusive Giant Anteater. As we scrutinised every termite mound, a Crested Caracara flew overhead, but it felt like looking for a needle in a haystack, as the savannah seemed endless, but fortunately the Karanambu vaqueros had been out on horseback since before first light in an effort to aid our search. A distant cowboy was spotted on the horizon, and yes he gave a wave of his hat as he rode barefoot in the stirrup. And there it was the biggest Giant Anteater imaginable! The gigantic giant turned out to be a female with a half-grown youngster on its back, and unbelievably the animal came within a few metres of where we stood with cameras poised. Incredibly, the shoulder stripes of both the adult and young merged together giving the impression of an even more gigantic animal, no doubt an adaptation to deter and scare off potential predators. As the huge shaggy beast slowly walked on its knuckles past us with an ambling gate, we stood mesmerised, as for many a dream had come true.

Further exploration revealed a pair of Burrowing Owls, numerous Grassland Sparrows, several Grassland Yellow-Finches, a pair of colourful Eastern Meadowlarks and not least, a stunning Double-striped Thicknee. A nearby wetland was alive with birds, with the highlight being a pair of Wedge-tailed Grassfinches, and as we drove further across the savannah both Vermillion Flycatcher and American Kestrel were seen well.

Our next destination was Maracouba Pond, a beautiful location and literally stuffed with enormous pads of *Victoria amazonica*, many in full bloom. As we disembarked from our vehicles, we watched a huge Owl Butterfly, before following a winding trail around the lake. Three Least Grebes were very unusual and a wealth of water birds were present, including a majestic Jabiru. However, some splashing amongst the water lilies revealed two adult Giant River Otters actively in search of fish! To watch them in this habitat was nothing short of spectacular, and we were treated to prolonged views as they repeatedly caught and ate fish, which were clearly abundant in the pond.

On our return to the ranch, we watched a huge vortex of soaring birds rising out of the nearby gallery forest. The huge flock consisted of over 200 Woodstorks, which soared in a spectacle to behold.

Delayed by wildlife, we descended ravenously on our breakfast, still rather shell-shocked from our wonderful mornings good fortune. With plenty of time to spare, we packed our belongings for our onward departure and long drive across the northern Rupununi savannahs to our next destination, the Rock View Lodge.

However, before saying our fond farewells to Diane, Melanie and Edward, and not forgetting our two local guides Kenneth and Manuel (Makushi Indians), there was still time for some final birding, with Brown-crested Flycatcher being amongst the highlights.

**Birds recorded at Karanambu:**

Least Grebe (3), Anhinga (2), Muscovy Duck (3), Cocoi Heron (3), Great Egret (4), Rufescent Tiger-Heron (1), Jabiru (2), Woodstork (200), Black Vulture (10), Turkey Vulture (25), Plumbeous Kite (8), Savannah Hawk (3), Black-collared Hawk (1), White-tailed Hawk (3), Northern Crested Caracara (4), American Kestrel (2), Double-striped Thicknee (1), Wattled Jacana (30), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Pale-vented Pigeon

(4), Eared Dove (8), Ruddy Ground-Dove (1), Yellow-headed Parrot (25), Smooth-billed Ani (6), Burrowing Owl (2), White-tailed Goldenthrout (1), Glittering-throated Emerald (2), Green Kingfisher (2), Yellow-chinned Spinetail (2), Black-crested Antshrike (2), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (20), White-headed Marsh-Tyrant (7), Pied Water-Tyrant (2), Vermillion Flycatcher (2), Common Tody-Flycatcher (1), Tropical Kingbird (1), Brown-crested Flycatcher (1), Blue-backed Manakin (1), Barn Swallow (50), Tropical Mockingbird (2), Blue-grey Tanager (4), Palm Tanager (4), Ruddy Seedeater (4), Grassland Yellow-Finch (5), Grassland Sparrow (15), Wedge-tailed Grassfinch (2), Eastern Meadowlark (2), Red-breasted Blackbird (15), Yellow-rumped Cacique (3).

Our planned method of transfer had been by boat down the Rupununi River to Ginep Landing and onwards by 4x4 vehicles to Rock View Lodge. However, with the river being very low this was not possible as our boats would have been grounded by the shallow water levels and numerous obstacles.

Even so, it was with building excitement that we drove in our two vehicles across the seemingly endless Savannah, with our destination somewhere in the Pakaraima foothills, a very distant smudge on the horizon.

We watched White-faced Whistling-Ducks and a Jabiru on one of several ponds and lakes, and a Crested Bobwhite was flushed amongst some scrub at one of our many stops. And, as we finally reached the foothills, a stop at a bridge to watch a pair of Yellow Orioles at their pendulous nest, revealed a Pale-legged Hornero at the waters edge and a Rufous-browed Peppershrike in a nearby tree.

As we drove onwards flocks of Plumbeous Seedeaters were common, and three juvenile Jabirus next to the track were a spectacle as they panted in the afternoon heat.

Our roadside picnic stop, where we ate a rather late lunch, provided us with superb views of Black-faced Tanager. Further on we encountered more Crested Bobwhite and a Limpkin in a roadside wetland. A large flock of Black Vultures perched in some trees revealed a spectacular adult King Vulture.

Finally, we arrived at Annai, the northern most Amerindian community in the Rupununi, and the nearby Rock View Lodge, where we immediately settled into the comforts of our luxurious accommodation and some very cold beers!

**Birds recorded on overland drive from Karanambu to Rock View Lodge:**

Neotropical Cormorant (1), Great Egret (12), Snowy Egret (1), Jabiru (6), White-faced Whistling-Duck (7), Muscovy Duck (1), King Vulture (1), Black Vulture (50), Turkey Vulture (25), Lesser yellow-headed Vulture (1), Savannah Hawk (4), Yellow-headed Caracara (2), Crested Bobwhite (16), Limpkin (1), Southern Lapwing (5), Eared Dove (6), Common Ground-Dove (6), Smooth-billed Ani (22), Pale-legged Hornero (1), Vermillion Flycatcher (2), Short-crested Flycatcher (1), Boat-billed Flycatcher (1), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (10), Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet (h), Barn Swallow (30), Rufous-browed Peppershrike (1), Black-faced Tanager (3), Finsch's Euphonia (2), Blue-grey Tanager (2), Plumbeous Seedeater (16), Blue-black Grassquit (2), Eastern Meadowlark (2), Red-breast Blackbird (1), Yellow Oriole (6).

Rock View Lodge has been built and established by Colin Edwards (an Englishman) and his family. With its tropical gardens and flowering trees, it resembles an oasis in the savannah and acts as a magnet, attracting many species of birds – it also is the only bar for several hundred kilometres!

Colin's son Jorge took us on an informative introductory tour of the grounds and gardens, which made us appreciate all the hard work and passion that had resulted in Rock View. A hovering White-tailed Kite was also new for the trip.

**Birds recorded at Rock View Lodge:**

Turkey Vulture (5), White-tailed Kite (1).

**Mammals recorded:**

Giant Anteater (2, adult female + young), Giant River Otter (2, adults).

**Reptiles recorded:**

Green Iguana (1).

**Day 9 Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**Rock View Lodge and nature trail/  
the northern Rupununi savannahs  
and adjacent rainforest**

Our day began at with hot drinks at 0545 before departing for the nearby Rock View nature trail. The trail winds its way up a steep hillside (Pakaraima foothills), to a campsite on the summit where there is a viewpoint.

It was wonderful to depart in the pre-dawn light and in the company of our local guide Hendrix (no relation to Jimmy!). We embarked on the winding trail on well placed steps and handrails helping us on the steepest sections!

Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant was eventually seen well and a Streak-headed Woodcreeper lingered long enough to eventually be identified. A Grey-crowned Flatbill was watched actively nest building, before our attention was drawn to some ground movement and leaf tossing, and our eyes connected with a stunning male White-bellied Antbird (race *griseipectus*). As we watched this gorgeous antbird it was quickly joined by a female, before both 'vanished' in the ground layer.

On reaching the summit we sat above a small cliff enjoying the panoramic views across the northern Rupununi savannahs, appreciating the opportunity to be eye-level and even look down on the numerous feeding flocks active in the canopy. Both Violaceous and Finsch's Euphonias were seen well and a Crimson-crested Woodpecker was spectacular.

We followed a different trail down and explored a rock face where the overhang formed a small cave, where we admired some ancient broken pottery which had been excavated. A 'whirr' of wings drew our attention to a stunning Sooty-capped Hermit, which had built its pendulous nest suspended from the cavern roof, sheltered and safe from predators.

Finally, we returned to Rock View elated with our early morning adventure and ravenous for descended our breakfast.

**Birds recorded at Rock View nature trail:**

Turkey Vulture (10), White-tipped Dove (3), Brown-throated Parakeet (8), Glittering-throated Emerald (1), Sooty-capped Hermit (1), Crimson-crested Woodpecker (1), Streak-headed Woodcreeper (1), Cinereous Antshrike (1), White-bellied Antbird (3), Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant (1), Southern beardless Tyrannulet (1), Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet (1), Short-crested Flycatcher (2), Great Kiskadee (1), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (1), Grey-crowned Flatbill (4), Red-eyed Vireo (2), Cayenne Jay (6), Tropical Gnatcatcher (1), Palm Tanager (2), Blue-grey Tanager (2), Finsch's Euphonia (2), Violaceous Euphonia (2).

With more wildlife beckoning we embarked on a drive across the savannah to birdwatch along the forest edge where the road entered deep into the Iwokrama rainforest, although some opted to enjoy the comforts of Rock View, including the luxury of the swimming pool.

In the mid-morning heat we were less than optimistic, but as we drove across the savannah we watched a Short-tailed Hawk soaring over a patch of gallery forest, before we came across a flock of no less than 55 Southern Lapwings which had gathered around a small roadside pool.

Finally, on reaching the rainforest we opted to walk along the track, and almost immediately we located an enormous Great Potoo as it perched immobile at its daytime roost on a dead branch in a tall tree. Potoos are a small, uniquely Neotropical family of solitary nocturnal birds, and the Great Potoo the largest of all. Its pale plumage, marbled and reticulated with black, conferring an 'invisibility' which goes well beyond camouflage! This was a real find and we took the opportunity to enjoy this strange 'alien-like' bird for a very long time!

Finally, we embarked on our walk enjoying a perched Plumbeous Kite and a Yellow-tufted Woodpecker as it searched for insects in a dead tree. A pair of Green Aracaris perched obligingly, as did a pair of elegant Long-tailed Tyrants. A Black Nunbird was slightly less easy to see, but came good for everyone in the end, and Red and Green Macaws seemed almost common. However, best of all was a superb Cinnamon-throated Woodcreeper, which obligingly landed in a tall bare tree, before disappearing into the forest. This uncommon resident of the tall forest is not easy to see and was a real find.

We could not believe our good fortune and as we drove back across the savannah we admired a perched Black-collared Hawk and for the lucky few, a Pearl Kite.

**Birds recorded from rainforest road and associated savannah during the morning excursion:**

Turkey Vulture (5), Pearl Kite (1), Plumbeous Kite (1), Savannah Hawk (2), Black-collared Hawk (1), Short-tailed Hawk (1), Southern Lapwing (55), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Common Ground-Dove (4), Red and green Macaw (5), Great Potoo (1), Black Nunbird (1), Green Aracari (2), Channel-billed Toucan (1), Yellow-tufted Woodpecker (1), Cinnamon-throated Woodcreeper (1), Vermillion Flycatcher (1), White-headed Marsh-Tyrant (2), Short-crested Flycatcher (1), Boat-billed Flycatcher (1), Variegated Flycatcher (1), Long-tailed Tyrant (1), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (6), Tropical Kingbird (1), Black-tailed Tityra (2), Cayenne Jay (1), Grey-breasted Martin (2), Southern rough-winged Swallow (1), Silver-beaked Tanager (1), Palm Tanager (2), Yellow Oriole (2).

After lunch, siestas and some relaxing around the swimming pool, we were ready for our afternoon excursion, back out across the savannah and further exploration along the forest road.

**Birds recorded at Rock View Lodge:**

Savannah Hawk (2), Common Tody-Flycatcher (1), Tropical Mockingbird (1), Red-breasted Blackbird (1), Giant Cowbird (10), Troupial (1).

We stopped again to view the Great Potoo, which was still on perch before venturing further into the forest. Two Golden-winged Parrotlets flew overhead and two Solitary Sandpipers fed by a forest pool. A pair of Pied Puffbirds were located in a dead tree, but a Dusky Parrot was seen in flight only, as was a Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift. A pair of White-lored Euphonias were a good find and the selection of birds recorded gave us a good taste of what the Iwokrama rainforest had to offer and a flavour of things to come. However, best of all was the return journey across the savannah, where in the fading light we were treated to the spectacle of several Nacunda Nighthawks and numerous Lesser Nighthawks in a frenzy of activity which brought many of the birds very close to our watch point. Elated, we returned to Rock View for cold drinks and a sumptuous dinner.

**Birds recorded along rainforest road and associated savannah:**

Lesser yellow-headed Vulture (2), Plumbeous Kite (1), Roadside Hawk (1), Savannah Hawk (2), Solitary Sandpiper (2), Plumbeous Pigeon (1), Red and green Macaw (2), Dusky Parrot (1), Golden-winged Parakeet (2), Squirrel Cuckoo (1), Great Potoo (1), Nacunda Nighthawk (8), Lesser Nighthawk (25), Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift (1), Band-rumped Swift (10), Amazon white-tailed Trogon (1), Pied Puffbird (2), Black Nunbird (1), Black-necked Aracari (2), Green Aracari (1), Channel-billed Toucan (1), White-throated Toucan (1), Lineated Woodpecker (1), Screaming Piha (h), Cayenne Jay (7), Grey-breasted Martin (3), Blackpoll Warbler (1), Palm Tanager (1), Turquoise Tanager (2), Silver-beaked Tanager (1), White-lored Euphonia (2), Blue Dacnis (1), Plumbeous Seedeater (8), Eastern Meadowlark (2), Green Oropendola (1).

**Day 10 Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**Rock View/Iwokrama Forest  
Canopy Walkway/Iwokrama  
Forest Field Station**

A very early start was called for so that we would arrive at the Canopy Walkway as soon after first light as possible, and as we gathered in the darkness at 0430 for hot drinks, there was much excitement. After a short delay we boarded our transport, an open-topped ex-British army lorry and began the 1½ hour drive deep into the rainforest. In the pre-dawn light we watched a Savannah Fox as it ran along the track ahead of us, and as the sun began to rise, numerous pairs of raucous Red and green Macaws, and a few Scarlets treated us to a rainbow of colours as they skimmed the treetops above our heads. A Mealy Parrot perched high in a treetop and two Marail Guans fed in a *Cecropia*, as a flock of eight Swallow-tailed Kites flew

overhead. And as we neared our destination, we watched a Red-rumped Agouti as it foraged nervously on the forest edge, and a Black Curassow in an open area, was simply magnificent.

**Birds recorded en route to the Canopy Walkway on our journey from Rock View:**

Swallow-tailed Kite (8), Plumbeous Kite (1), Great Black Hawk (1), Little Chachalaca (h), Marail Guan (2), Black Curassow (1), Scarlet Macaw (4), Red and green Macaw (20), Mealy Parrot (1), White-throated Toucan (1).

Finally, we entered the Iwokrama Reserve area and after turning off down a short track, we arrived at the trail which leads to the Canopy Walkway. The Canopy Walkway is a series of suspension bridges and observation decks of up to 30 metres (98 ft) in height and 154 metres (505 ft) in length. The facilities' state-of-the-art construction allows trees to grow normally by using adjustable cables and braces throughout the support structure. The four observation decks enable visitors to view the mid and upper-level forest canopy and allow wildlife to remain relatively free from human intrusion. As we reached the impressive structure, we could only marvel at the skills which had enabled its construction.

As we made our way along the first walkway, two Guianan Sakis, a notoriously shy species of monkey, were glimpsed as they fed in a nearby fruiting tree, before vanishing into the forest. A Screaming Piha followed suit, but 'staking-out' the fruiting tree proved productive with at least three Amazon White-throated Trogons nervously seeking out the ripening fruits. Two Caica Parrots flew in and perched nearby, before our attention was drawn back to the fruiting tree and a stunning Guianan Toucanet!

Viewing from the other platform produced a superb female Pompadour Cotinga, a rare treat as it fed at eye-level. Four Golden-winged Parakeets flew in and landed in a nearby treetop and we were able to see every detail of their plumage, again impossible when viewing from the ground.

More good birds followed with a single Purple-throated Cotinga perched nearby, followed by a flock of six in the same tree. A Violaceous Trogon was also attracted to the fruiting tree and two soaring White Hawks were superb.

Black Spider Monkeys called loudly from somewhere deep in the canopy, but always hidden from our straining eyes, and a pair of Chestnut Woodpeckers were seen by a few. While some succumbed to the pangs of hunger and retreated to a nearby campsite for our specially prepared al fresco breakfast, others remained in the canopy not wanting to miss out on anything! And as the morning progressed, increasing numbers of mixed feeding flocks began to appear. Both Yellow-green and Slate-coloured Grosbeaks were seen well and both Purple and Red-legged Honeycreepers were a delight. A male Fasciated Antshrike was spectacular and canopy feeding Todd's and Spot-tailed Antwrens were unforgettable. Two Zimmer's Flatbills were fly catching at eye-level and a flock of six Painted Parakeets were a fitting end to a superb mornings wildlife watching in the rainforest canopy.

**Birds recorded from the Canopy Walkway:**

King Vulture (1), White Hawk (2), Red-throated Caracara (1), Ruddy Pigeon (1), Red and green Macaw (1), Caica Parrot (2), Painted Parakeet (6), Golden-winged Parakeet (4), Amazon white-tailed Trogon (3), Amazon Violaceous Trogon (1), Pied Puffbird (2), Guianan Toucanet (2), Chestnut Woodpecker (2), Fasciated Antshrike (1), Spot-tailed Antwren (2), Todd's Antwren (2), Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant (1), Zimmer's Flatbill (2), Screaming Piha (1), Pompadour Cotinga (1), Purple-throated Fruitcrow (7), Bay-headed Tanager (3), Red-legged Honeycreeper (2), Purple Honeycreeper (2), Slate-coloured Grosbeak (1), Yellow-green Grosbeak (2).

As we returned to the trail head we arrived to find two 4x4 vehicles waiting for us and our onward transfer to the Iwokrama Field Station. We drove for one and half hours through the pristine rainforest reserve, which encompasses 3,700 square kilometres! In 1989, the government of Guyana offered to set aside the Iwokrama Forest to the international community to be used as a demonstration area where the ecological, social and economic nature and potential of tropical rainforests could be studied and tested in the hands-on way. The resulting knowledge is used to show how forest ecosystems can be used to increase social and economic benefits to forest user groups everywhere, without destroying the forest.

We finally arrived at the Essequibo River, where a ferry transfers vehicles to the other side and from here we transferred to a small boat for a short journey down river to the Iwokrama Field Station.

**Birds recorded on transfer to the Iwokrama Field Station including the boat journey down the Essequibo River:**

Neotropic Cormorant (5), Great Black Hawk (1), Pied Plover (3), Collared Plover (1), Large-billed Tern (1), Silver-beaked Tanager (10).

We arrived to a warm welcome and chilled fruit drinks, followed by a nice lunch. After lunch, we took the opportunity to rest and relax, followed by some exploration of the grounds and nearby Woodcreeper Trail into the adjacent forest. At 1600 hrs we embarked on the nearby Screaming Piha Trail in the company of our local guide, who took us through some magnificent primary rainforest. Birds were few, but as we listened to the plaintive call of a Little Tinamou, we watched a Red Howler Monkey high in the canopy. A White-necked Puffbird was stunning as it perched above us, and a further visit to the Woodcreeper Trail produced two enormous Spix's Guans.

Returning to the lodge we enjoyed some cold beers, dinner and an optional night boat trip where we spotlighted numerous Spectacled Caiman and a sleeping Anhinga!

**Birds recorded at the Iwokrama Field Station, on the nearby Woodcreeper and Screaming Piha Trails and on the night boat trip:**

Little Tinamou (h), Anhinga (1), Little Blue Heron (1), Little Chachalaca (2), Spix's Guan (2), Pied Plover (6), Common Ground-Dove (4), Orange-winged Parrot (2), White-necked Puffbird (1), Swallow-winged Puffbird (2), White-throated Toucan (1), Plain Xenops (1), Cinereous Antshrike (1), Rufous-bellied Antwren (1), Grey Antwren (1), Silver-beaked Tanager (6), Blue-grey Tanager (8), Palm Tanager (10), Turquoise Tanager (1), White-shouldered Tanager (1), Red-capped Cardinal (12), Giant Cowbird (5), Epaulet Oriole (1).

**Mammals recorded:**

Savannah Fox (1), Red-rumped Agouti (1), Guianan Saki (2), Black Spider Monkey (h), Wedge-capped Capuchin (4), Red Howler Monkey (1).

**Reptiles recorded:**

Spectacled Caiman (15+), Parrot Snake (1).

**Day 11 Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**Iwokrama rainforest (Essequibo River, Turtle Mountain, Woodcreeper Trail)**

Our day started 0530 with some optional birding around the Lodge, with the highlight being our first Blue-headed Parrot. After breakfast we boarded our boat at 0700 for a journey down river to the start of the trail, which winds its way up Turtle Mountain, our major expedition of the day.

As we made our way down the massive river, we came across a flock of Black-collared Swallows as they perched upon a rock protruding from the brown swirling water. Two perched Bat Falcons were superb, but our attention was soon drawn to a very large raptor, which was perched in the crown of the riverside tree. As we slowly edged closer, it soon became clear that we were not looking at any of the birds of prey we had seen previously, and as we held our breath we soon realised we were looking at either a Crested or Harpy Eagle, both of which are only very rarely encountered. As we closed to 100m we could make out the black crest, and ever closer, we were terrified the eagle would vanish into the canopy without being properly identified. Finally, the eagle turned to face us and we could fully see the black chest band – an adult Harpy Eagle! Hardly believing our luck, we nudged even closer, until we were under 30m from the bird!! The huge bill and massive feet looking awesome as we stared into its dark amber eyes, the eyes of a true predator. Finally, after a massive photo session the Harpy began to move from perch to perch, before finally vanishing into the forest canopy as we sat mesmerised in our boat. Unbelievably, the whole encounter had lasted over 15 minutes. What a start to our day, a new bird for everyone, including the leader!

Finally, we arrived at the start of the trail to Turtle Mountain and after disembarking we began our hike deep into the rainforest. However, we found our path blocked by a flooded channel, and after removing our boots and socks, we waded on through, although some of us felt we could walk on water after the Harpy Eagle!

The trail wound its way through beautiful primary forest, the enormous trees towering above us. Screaming Pihas called loudly from their unseen perches, and with a little effort, we soon located one and enjoyed superb views as it belted out its song, one of the true sounds of the rainforest.

Some prolonged screams caused us to leave the trail, and our search soon revealed a troupe of Black Spider Monkeys. The Guianan race *A.p. panisus*, have red faces and long hair, and they were a wonderful sight as they screamed and howled high above our heads, but when they started to break-off branches and throw them at us, we knew it was time to beat a hasty retreat.

The trail by now had begun to ascend a steep incline, and as we huffed and puffed our way up, we paused to watch a Grey-breasted Sabrewing, a large species of hummingbird which inhabits the forest.

Onwards and upwards we climbed, frequently pausing to admire the wildlife and unusual plants. A Collared Puffbird was stunning as it sat on its low perch and a real find as this is a very hard to find species.

Finally, we arrived at the afforested summit of Turtle Mountain (975 ft asl) and made our way to an area of open cliff, where the views out over the rainforest were stunning. And from our viewpoint, we basked in the cooling breeze and bright sunshine, watching Swallow-tailed Kites as they soared past at eye-level on the up-draught.

Our descent was surprisingly quick and we paused frequently to listen to the sounds of the forest, but Wedge-capped Capuchin Monkeys remained only heard and unseen. Finally, we arrived back on level ground, where we paused to watch a Screaming Piha in full song. Further progress was slow as we 'sifted' through the numerous mixed feeding flocks of birds in a frenzy of feeding activity. Many species were only glimpsed, but both Wedge-billed and Amazon Barred Woodcreepers were seen well. Several antbirds were also seen, including Black-chinned Antbird and White-flanked Antwren. A Rufous-tailed Flatbill was located on its low perch as it sat motionless, watching for prey, and was yet another very 'good' bird.

Finally, we approached the Essequibo River bank, to find that the water level had risen considerably and flooded the last section of our trail. However, our boatman had expertly manoeuvred our boat to collect us from a dry spot, so no wading was necessary!

We returned to the field station, elated after what had been a truly amazing morning in the Iwokrama rainforest. After a rather late lunch, we rested before some relaxed birding in the clearing produced both Blue-headed and Red-fan Parrots, and a Chapman's Swift as it flew over the canopy.

At 1615 we embarked on the Woodcreeper Trail, which proved rather quiet, but as we emerged onto a track a Black Curassow was glimpsed, but a pair of Red-fan Parrots were rather more obliging. We walked along the road to the Essequibo River ferry crossing and enjoyed a pair of Marail Guans in the nearby *Cecropia* tree, and a Bat Falcon flew overhead as the light began to fade.

We arrived at the jetty to find a field station boat waiting for us and in no time at all, after a quick journey down river, we were enjoying a cold beer before dinner.

**Birds recorded in the Iwokrama Forest:**

Neotropical Cormorant (8), Cocoi Heron (1), Great Egret (2), Little Blue Heron (1), Straited Heron (1), Greater Yellow-headed Vulture (1), Swallow-tailed Kite (10), Plumbeous Kite (4), Harpy Eagle (1), Bat Falcon (3), Spix's Guan (h), Marail Guan (2), Black Curassow (1), Pied Plover (9), Yellow-billed Tern (1), Large-billed Tern (1), Common Ground-Dove (4), Red and green Macaw (2), Blue-headed Parrot (2), Orange-winged Parrot (10), Red-fan Parrot (4), Band-rumped Swift (10), Chapman's Swift (1), Grey-breasted Sabrewing (1), Black-eared Fairy (2), Collared Puffbird (1), White-throated Toucan (1), Plain Xenops (1), Wedge-billed Woodcreeper (1), Amazonian Barred Woodcreeper (1), Mouse-coloured Antshrike (1), Cinereous Antshrike (3), White-flanked Antwren (2), Long-winged Antwren (2), Grey Antwren (2), Black-chinned Antwren (1), Rufous-tailed Flatbill (1), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (1), Screaming Piha (2 + several heard), White-winged Swallow (15), White-banded Swallow (1), Black-collared Swallow (15), Tropical Mockingbird (2), Palm Tanager (10), Silver-beaked Tanager (10), Red-legged Honeycreeper (2), Giant Cowbird (1), Moriche Oriole (2), Epaulet Oriole (1).

**Mammals recorded:**

Black Spider Monkey (4+), Wedge-capped Capuchin (h).

Day 12 Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Iwokrama Field Station/Muri  
scrub/Cock of the Rock  
Trail/Surama

An early start was required and breakfast was at 0530. With all our luggage packed the night before, we were soon ready for our boat transfer and our awaiting 4x4 vehicles. We listened to the haunting calls of a Little Tinamou, as a pair of Red and green Macaws flew over our heads.

As we left the jetty in the field station boat, we watched a perched Bat Falcon, and in no time at all we had arrived at the slipway to find our vehicles awaiting.

**Birds recorded at Iwokrama Field Station:**

Little Tinamou (h), Bat Falcon (1), Red and Green Macaw (2), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (2), Palm Tanager (10), Red-capped Cardinal (8).

Our first destination of the morning was an area of Muri scrub, an odd habitat to find in the rainforest, consisting of an area of stunted forest located on white sand.

We quickly loaded our vehicles and were soon on our way, on the hour and fifteen minute journey to our destination. As we made good progress along the dirt road, a Nine-banded Armadillo crossed in front of us, followed by a Red-rumped Agouti and two Black Curassows.

On our arrival, we followed a trail deep into the forest. A Great Tinamou was repeatedly calling, the song loud and rich and resonant, but despite our best efforts, it remained hidden in the ground layer. Rather more obliging was a female White-crowned Manakin, but otherwise the Muri scrub was disappointingly quiet and we decided not to linger.

Our next stop was the Cock of the Rock Trail located towards the edge of the reserve. En route we stopped at a bridge to admire a cryptic juvenile Rufescent Tiger-Heron by a small stream, and further on, a species of Boa Constrictor which unfortunately was dead in the road, but looked surprisingly alive nonetheless!

We arrived at the Cock of the Rock Trail at 1000 and immediately entered the tall primary rainforest. As we arrived at the lek site we were disappointed that no male Guianan Cock of the Rocks were present, but amongst the boulders was a cave where we were able to watch a female Cock of the Rock incubating her clutch of eggs in her mud and moss, cup-like nest cemented to the rock face. From a safe distance, without risk of disturbance, it was a real privilege to see such a special breeding bird. Elated, we made our way through the bouldered forest to rejoin the main trail. A raucous pair of Scarlet Macaws flew overhead as we watched at least two Wedge-rumped Capuchins and two Spix's Guans. A Black-banded Woodcreeper was superb, but as we followed the trail we could not believe our luck, as there before us, at its daytime roost, low in the mid-canopy, was a stunning Long-tailed Potoo. This very uncommon resident of the lowland rainforest is rarely seen, and to find one at a daytime roost is virtually unheard of!

A pair of antbirds remained unidentified, but both male Violaceous and Amazonian White-tailed Trogons were more obliging. A Lineated Woodcreeper was special, and a male White-crowned Manakin superb, but best of all was a female Fulvous Shrike Tanager, which we watched catch and devour an enormous insect.

Finally, it was time to leave and continue our journey to the Amerindian community of Surama.

**Birds recorded in Iwokrama Forest (including Muri scrub area and the Cock of the Rock Trail):**

Great Tinamou (h), Rufescent Tiger-Heron (1), Little Blue Heron (1), Swallow-tailed Kite (1), Plumbeous Kite (5), Great Black Hawk (1), Red-throated Caracara (3), Spix's Guan (2), Black Curassow (2), Scarlet Macaw (2), Red and green Macaw (8), Long-tailed Potoo (1), Band-rumped Swift (10), Amazon white-tailed Trogon (2), Amazon Violaceous Trogon (1), Ringed Kingfisher (1), Amazon Kingfisher (1), Black Nunbird (1), Swallow-winged Puffbird (2), Black-necked Araracri (4), Plain Xenops (1), Black-banded Woodcreeper (1), Lineated Woodcreeper (1), Mouse-coloured Antshrike (h), White-flanked Antwren (1), Tropical Kingbird (1), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (1), White-crowned Manakin (2), Guianan Cock of the Rock (1), Red-legged Honeycreeper (2), Green Honeycreeper (1), Fulvous Shrike-Tanager (1), Yellow-rumped Cacique (2), Green Oropendola (4).

The village of Surama is situated in a small savannah, deep in the rainforest and surrounded by forest clad hills. On our arrival, we received a warm welcome from the local people and were quickly taken to our accommodation, where we had lunch.

After we had rested, we embarked on some exploration of the savannah and adjacent forest in the company of our local guide Milner. Milner, originally a hunter, was born and bred at Surama and is exceptionally knowledgeable about the rainforest and skilled at finding wildlife.

Birds characteristic of the Rupununi savannah, such as Fork-tailed Flycatchers and Grassland Sparrow were seen well, and as we entered the forest a Reddish Hermit, a tiny species of hummingbird briefly flew around us. A Greyish Mourner was high in the canopy and a Red-legged Tinamou called loudly, but remained hidden in the vegetation. A White-necked Thrush was glimpsed as we watched two 'dancing' male Golden-headed Manakins as they displayed at their communal lek in the mid-canopy. However, our attention was drawn to the far-carrying growling song of several Capuchin birds. With great skill Milner led us through the forest, and as we looked up into the canopy we could see several of these large and very strange looking birds. Their bald heads and strange hump-shouldered appearance was an unforgettable sight as they perched and moved through the canopy.

Excited by our encounter, we returned across the savannah and watched an Amethyst Woodstar as it foraged amongst the scrub. A second hummingbird, initially thought to be another woodstar, was subsequently identified as a female Tufted Coquette (showed a white rump band).

We arrived back at our accommodation in the fading light, to find our dinner prepared and ready for our return, and after refreshing showers, we enjoyed a relaxed evening discussing the wonderful events of the day and the delights in store for us in the morning.

**Birds recorded at Surama:**

Great Tinamou (h), Red-legged Tinamou (h), Woodstork (3), Plumbeous Kite (2), Savannah Hawk (1), Red-throated Caracara (2), Common Ground-Dove (6), Brown-throated Parakeet (2), Reddish Hermit (1), Glittering-throated Emerald (1), Amethyst-throated Woodstar (1), Tufted Coquette (1), Swallow-winged Puffbird (4), Channel-billed Toucan (2), Thrush-like Antpitta (h), Mouse-coloured Antshrike (h), Greyish Mourner (1), Variegated Flycatcher (1), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (2), Capuchinbird (10), Golden-headed Manakin (2), Screaming Piha (h), Cayenne Jay (2), Grey-breasted Martin (2), White-necked Thrush (1), Blue-grey Tanager (2), Grassland Sparrow (1), Yellow-rumped Cacique (30).

**Mammals recorded:**

Red-rumped Agouti (1), Nine-banded Armadillo (1), Wedge-capped Capuchin (2+).

**Reptiles recorded:**

Boa Constrictor (1 dead).

## Day 13 Saturday, 19th March 2005

## Surama

We got up early, and as we gathered in the pre-dawn light, we watched a Lesser Nighthawk hawking over the savannah and a Savannah Hawk being mobbed by a Pauraque. After hot drinks, we embarked on our long walk across the savannah and were greeted with a wealth of bird life.

A Crane Hawk flew nearby and a Northern Crested Caracara flew overhead carrying a lizard in its bill. A beautiful male Amethyst Woodstar searched for food, as Neotropical Palm Swifts flew overhead, but best of all was a male Pompadour Cotinga, which perched high in a dead tree, with a perfect rainbow arching above it as a rain storm skirted the savannah.

A perched Scaled Pigeon illustrated the beauty of this species and a Green-tailed Jacamar provided the photographers with some spectacular pictures. A Plumbeous Kite was watched nest building, delicately arranging sticks with meticulous care and interest.

Finally, after some superb birding in the savannahs, we entered the forest with building excitement. A perched Spix's Guan was stunning, but Great Tinamou and Black-headed Parrots were heard only, although a pair of skulking Buff-breasted Wrens eventually gave superb views. However, the best was yet to come, and as we walked along the winding trail, some guttural humming alerted us to the presence of a group of nearby Grey-winged Trumpeters. And as we trained our eyes ahead, at least eight of these strange and mysterious birds darted across our path, although Milner reckoned there were at least 20 in the group!

We found a nice spot for our picnic breakfast, which Milner had carefully carried in a hand-woven backpack. Re-invigorated, we continued our journey. A Black and yellow Poisoned Dart Frog provided us with further photographic opportunities and in an area of tall forest, we located a group of Capuchinbirds high in the canopy. Screaming Pihwas were calling all around, but a vocal group of Black Spider Monkeys, although close, remained hidden.

We arrived at the Burro Burro River and rested amongst the huge boulders, before embarking downstream in two canoes. Kingfishers were abundant with Amazons being the most numerous, and three individual Green and Rufous Kingfishers were superb. White-banded Swallows delicately caught insects as they skimmed over the water surface and a pair of King Vultures soared high overhead. A Common Piping Guan perched in a riverside tree, and as we paddled slowly in the bright sunshine, we flushed a juvenile Agami Heron as it lurked in the undergrowth and with patience, good views were had by all.

Finally, we disembarked and walked back in the mid-day heat, enjoying a lek of Golden-headed Manakins as we went. More birds followed and a late lunch resulted.

With many opting for siestas in the afternoon heat, some of us embarked on a tour of the village where we met and chatted with the locals, with Milner entertaining us with a wealth of information.

Some exploration of a hill trail produced a glimpse of Ferruginous-backed Antbird and a Blue-crowned Motmot. And as we returned in the fading light and walked the track through the village, we watched a single Lesser Nighthawk and five Solitary Sandpipers by a large puddle!

#### **Birds recorded at Surama:**

Great Tinamou (h), Red-legged Tinamou (h), Neotropical Cormorant (2), Anhinga (2), Cocoli Heron (1), Agami Heron (1), Turkey Vulture (3), King Vulture (2), Swallow-tailed Kite (2), Plumbeous Kite (1), Crane Hawk (1), Savannah Hawk (2), Riverside Hawk (2), Red-throated Caracara (4), Northern Crested Caracara (1), Yellow-headed Caracara (2), Spix's Guan (1), Common Piping Guan (1), Grey-winged Trumpeter (8), Southern Lapwing (3), Solitary Sandpiper (5), Scaled Pigeon (1), Pale-vented Pigeon (9), Common Ground-Dove (2), Ruddy Ground-Dove (2), Grey-fronted Dove (1), Red and green Macaw (3), Brown-throated Parakeet (4), Golden-winged Parakeet (h), Black-headed Parrot (h), Blue-headed Parrot (2), Dusky Parrot (1), Orange-winged Parrot (3), Smooth-billed Ani (6), Lesser Nighthawk (2), Pauraque (1), Short-tailed Swift (1), Neotropical Palm-Swift (4), White-chested Emerald (1), Glittering-throated Emerald (1), Black-eared Fairy (1), Amethyst Woodstar (1), Ringed Kingfisher (1), Amazon Kingfisher (6), Green and rufous Kingfisher (3), Blue-crowned Motmot (1), Green-tailed Jacamar (5), Spotted Puffbird (1), Black Nunbird (2), Swallow-winged Puffbird (2), Black-necked Aracari (2), Channel-billed Toucan (3), Crimson-crested Woodpecker (1), Rufous-rumped Foliage-gleaner (1), Ferruginous-backed Antbird (1), Eleania (2), Greyish Mourner (1), Great Kiskadee (4), Streaked Flycatcher (1), Piratic Flycatcher (1), Yellow-olive Flatbill (1), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (3), Screaming Piha (h), Pompadour Cotinga (1), Purple-throated Fruitcrow (h), Capuchinbird (3), Golden-headed Manakin (3), Blue-backed Manakin (h), Cayenne Jay (2), Grey-breasted Martin (2), White-banded Swallow (32), White-winged Swallow (2), Barn Swallow (4), Southern rough-winged Swallow (2), Buff-breasted Wren (3), Pale-breasted Thrush (1), Tropical Mockingbird (1), Silver-beaked Tanager (10), Palm Tanager (2), Violaceous Euphonia (4), Blue-grey Tanager (6), Grassland Sparrow (2), Giant Cowbird (4), Yellow-rumped Cacique (38), Red-rumped Cacique (4), Crested Oropendola (1).

#### **Mammals recorded:**

Black Spider Monkey (h), Sac-winged Bat spp. (40 at two daytime roosts).

#### **Amphibians recorded:**

'Black and yellow' poisoned Dart Frog (1).

## **Day 14 Sunday, 20th March 2005**

## **Surama**

Another pre-dawn start for our last full day in the rainforest. We walked across the savannah and into the forest on a trail which leads to the Burro Burro River for our early morning canoe expedition downstream.

As we entered the forest, the dawn chorus was spectacular and fresh tracks of both Ocelot and Brazilian Tapir were an indication of recent mammal activity.

We arrived at the riverside campsite and ate our picnic breakfast, watching birds and listening to the sounds of the forest. And as we ate, a Common Piping Guan perched in a *Cecropia* tree, watching our every movement. Short-tailed Swifts skimmed the treetops and a Long-billed Starthroat darted amongst the canopy.

We boarded our canoe with mounting excitement, and as we were paddled slowly down river, our eyes strained in every direction as the slightest movement could reveal the presence of something special. As we silently drifted along, we listened to the melodic song of a Cocoa Thrush, which magically appeared giving wonderful views.

Kingfishers were in abundance, with Ringed, Amazon and Green almost continually in view. We located yesterday's juvenile Agami Heron, which obligingly showed well and a perched Spix's Guan was superb. As we ventured further down river, Milner, ever alert in the prow, calmly indicated ahead, and our eyes focussed on three full-grown Giant River Otters as they swam and bobbed in the water. With cameras poised we edged forward, and were treated to unbelievable views of these delightful animals as they dived and snorted around us. We were able to study them at length, noting the contrasting individual throat patterns of cream and brown spots and splotches. These unique patterns stay with the animal for life, which enables identification of individuals even at great distance. They stayed with us for ages as we drifted downstream, before vanishing in a swirl of water.

A tiny Reddish Hermit darted by and a Black Curassow called loudly, but unseen from the riverbank. And a loud splash of a Spectacled Caiman reminded us that predators too frequented this paradise.

A fourth Giant Otter slipped out of its river bankholt, and both Black Spider Monkeys and Red Howler Monkeys frequented the tall canopy and it was magical to listen to their respective yelps and screams, and roars and howls.

We watched Red and green Macaws including a pair at their nest hole in a tall tree, as a rather sinister Stingray swam silently past. A Neotropical River Otter kept a low profile, and a sixth otter, turned out to be another Giant.

We went ashore to stretch our legs and immediately located a Giant Antshrike and a Dusky Antbird, while a pair of Crane Hawks displayed nearby. We re-boarded our canoe for the return journey back upstream, with Milner and our boatman making light work of the paddling as we negotiated semi-submerged trees and other obstacles.

A pair of White-necked Puffbirds were watched as they excavated a nest in an arboreal termites nest, and a Black-necked Aracari incubated its clutch with only its head and bill protruding from the nest hole high in a tree trunk. A feeding flock held a pair of White-shouldered Tanagers and a Slender-footed Tyrannulet, and a Mouse-coloured Antshrike showed well. Two Giant Otters played hide and seek, while a pair of Red-throated Caracaras kept up a loud raucous chorus of yodels as they sat and watched us from the canopy.

Another Agami Heron was located, slightly brighter plumage, but still not an adult, before we finally returned to disembark near the camp area. Some families from Surama were fishing, their children playing in the river and split open fish drying in the sun, a way of life which has remained unchanged over the centuries.

We rested in the clearing around the camp area, admiring a Green-tailed Jacamar and two Yellow-green Grosbeaks high in the canopy. And, as we began our walk back, a flock of Painted Parakeets flew in and landed nearby in an unbelievable rainbow of colours, pausing long enough for us to enjoy every detail.

We stopped for the various feeding flocks of birds which were still active in the mid-day heat, before our attention was drawn to something on the ground ahead of us. To our surprise, it was a Double-toothed Kite delicately drinking from a small puddle. Remarkably oblivious to our presence, it eventually took flight, only to land in a nearby tree. A huge Cane Toad, at least nine inches in height, blocked our path as it sat unafraid in the open, and as we continued our journey we all agreed that the Burro Burro River was a truly magical place. Drifting along in a canoe, listening to the buzz of insects, a chorus of bird song and the occasional 'snorting' of Giant Otters, had been an unforgettable experience.

After lunch and a relaxing couple of hours, most of us were ready for some further exploration. We headed across the savannah and a perched Scaled Pigeon and a Red and Green Macaw were beautiful in the afternoon sunshine. Our destination was a lake and en route we passed through a patch of dry woodland, which in the rainy season is completely flooded. A Great Tinamou ran ahead of us, pausing long enough to give us good views, before vanishing as all Tinamous do.

A large expanse of dry, but seasonally flooded savannah held several grassland species including a singing Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch and as we entered an extensive area of more 'dry' forest, we located a superb perched Blue-tailed Emerald.

Finally, we arrived at the lake, which was beautiful and serene in the late afternoon sunshine. We watched a Swallow-tailed Kite, flying low over the water, delicately sipping water from the mirror-like surface, without pausing to land, a true master of the air.

Yellow-billed Terns searched endlessly for small fish, and two Black Caracaras flew and landed on the lake shore, and like the kite, thirsty in the afternoon heat. And, as we moved round we located yet another stunning Spotted Puffbird, perched at eye-level.

A marshy area at the far end of the lake held a superb adult Jabiru, which strutted about in search of food, oblivious to our presence. A gorgeous Capped Heron fed nearby and amongst the numerous feeding Solitary Sandpipers sat a Pied Plover, and a single Black Skimmer. Spectacled Caiman cruised nearby, hardly making a ripple and a small flock of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks nervously took flight.

With time pressing, we walked further to visit a second lake, which like the first was stunningly beautiful. A family from the village were fishing, wading up to their waists catching a never ending supply of Pirana! We enjoyed the moment in the setting sun, before returning across the savannahs.

After dinner, a calling Common Potoo sent us rushing for our torches, the song beautiful and haunting. A unique sound of the neotropical forest and a wonderful end to an unforgettable day. Amazingly, we had recorded over 100 species of birds, not to mention our close-encounter with the Giant Otters, one of South America's rarest species of mammal.

#### **Birds recorded at Surama:**

Great Tinamou (1), Neotropic Cormorant (2), Anhinga (2), Muscovy Duck (4), Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (8), Rufescent Tiger-Heron (1), Cocoi Heron (1), Great Egret (4), Striated Heron (5), Agami Heron (2), Capped Heron (1), Jabiru (1), Black Vulture (6), Turkey Vulture (2), King Vulture (1), Swallow-tailed Kite (2), Double-toothed Kite (1), Plumbeous Kite (2), Crane Hawk (2), White Hawk (1), Savannah Hawk (2), Great Black Hawk (h), Black Caracara (2), Red-throated Caracara (2), Bat Falcon (1), Little Chachalaca (1), Spix's Guan (2), Common Piping-Guan (1), Black Curassow (h), Pied Lapwing (1), Solitary Sandpiper (7), Yellow-billed Tern (2), Black Skimmer (1), Wattled Jacana (3), Scaled Pigeon (1), Pale-vented Pigeon (6), Plain-breasted Ground-Dove (3), Common Ground-Dove (4), Ruddy Ground-Dove (2), White-tipped Dove (2), Grey-fronted Dove (2), Red and green Macaw (5), Painted Parakeet (10), Blue-headed parrot (1), Orange-winged Parrot (5), Squirrel Cuckoo (1), Smooth-billed Ani (12), Common Potoo (h), Short-tailed Swift (6), Reddish Hermit (2), White-chested Emerald (1), Glittering-throated Emerald (1), Long-billed Starthroat (1), Blue-tailed Emerald (1), Amazon White-tailed Trogon (1), Ringed Kingfisher (6), Amazon Kingfisher (3), Green Kingfisher (3), Green-tailed Jacamar (2), White-necked Puffbird (2), Swallow-winged Puffbird (5), Spotted Puffbird (1), Black Nunbird (1), Black-necked Aracari (1), Channel-billed Toucan (2), Wedge-billed Woodcreeper (1), Black-banded Woodcreeper (1), Great Antshrike (1), Mouse-coloured Antshrike (3), White-flanked Antwren (4), Grey Antwren (2), Ferruginous-backed Antbird (h), Dusky Antbird (1), Thrush-like Antpitta (h), Slender-footed Tyrannulet (1), Yellow-olive Flatbill (1), Short-crested Flycatcher (1), Great Kiskadee (2), Lesser Kiskadee (3), Streaked Flycatcher (1), Variegated Flycatcher (1), Tropical Kingbird (1), Screaming Piha (h), Capuchinbird (h), Buff-breasted Wren (1), White-banded Swallow (1), Cocoa Thrush (2), White-necked Thrush (1), Tropical Mockingbird (1), White-shouldered Tanager (2), Silver-beaked Tanager (6), Blue-grey Tanager (2), Palm Tanager (2), Yellow-green Grosbeak (2), Red-capped Cardinal (1), Blue-black Grassquit (6), Grassland Sparrow (1), Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch (1), Giant Cowbird (2), Yellow-rumped Cacique (30), Red-rumped Cacique (8), Crested Oropendola (15).

#### **Mammals recorded:**

Giant River Otter (5), Neotropical Otter (1), Black Spider Monkey (h), Ocelot (fresh tracks), Brazilian Tapir (fresh tracks), Sac-winged Bat spp (30+), Red Howler Monkey (h).

#### **Reptiles, Amphibians, fish and invertebrates:**

Spectacled Caiman (15), Cane Toad (1), Stingray (1), 'River' Crab (1).

**Day 15 Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2005**

**Surama/Rock View Lodge/  
Georgetown (Botanic Gardens)**

An optional early start, with some birding before breakfast produced some 'classic' rainforest birds, but best of all was a troupe of at least eight Wedge-capped Capuchins.

**Birds recorded before and after breakfast at Surama:**

Savannah Hawk (1), Roadside Hawk (2), Northern Crested Caracara (2), Yellow-headed Caracara (1), Spix's Guan (1), Common Ground-Dove (10), Red and green Macaw (2), Brown-throated Parakeet (2), Smooth-billed Ani (8), Short-tailed Swift (10), Swallow-winged Puffbird (1), Channel-billed Toucan (2), White-throated Toucan (2), Ferruginous-backed Antbird (h), Piratic Flycatcher (1), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (2), Great Kiskadee (2), Barn Swallow (2), Pale-breasted Thrush (1), Blue-grey Tanager (4), Palm Tanager (2), Grassland Sparrow (1), Yellow-rumped Cacique (30), Giant Cowbird (2).

After saying our fond farewells, we left Surama in our 4x4 vehicle for our transfer to Rock View Lodge.

**Birds seen en route to Rock View Lodge:**

Northern Crested Caracara (1), Crested Bobwhite (2), Squirrel Cuckoo (1), Black-winged Aracari (1), Southern rough-winged Swallow (3), White-winged Swallow (2).

We arrived at Rock View in plenty of time to enjoy a relaxed lunch, some birding and with dayrooms available, plenty of opportunity to freshen-up. Our aircraft arrived on time, and in no time at all we had boarded and were winging our way to Georgetown.

**Birds recorded at Rock View Lodge:**

Black Vulture (15), Turkey Vulture (10), Savannah Hawk (1), Common Ground-Dove (20), Black-crested Antshrike (1), Great Kiskadee (6), Blue-grey Tanager (6), Palm Tanager (10), Burnished-buff Tanager (4), Grassland Yellow-Finch (2).

After arriving at the Ogle airstrip, we quickly transferred to the comforts of the Le Meridien Pegasus, our palatial overnight accommodation. After our more rustic existence in the Rupununi, the luxury of hot water in our ensuite bathrooms, air-conditioned bedrooms and electric lights left us feeling we had been catapulted back into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, a quick turn around was called for us as we embarked on our afternoon excursion to the Georgetown Botanic Gardens. The expanse of managed gardens are complimented by extensive areas of semi-natural habitat, and the two combined to make an important refuge for birds.

On arrival we made straight for the huge breeding colony of Cattle Egrets. Numerous nesting pairs of Black-crowned Night-Herons were scattered throughout the heronry, and with careful searching we located several nesting pairs of Little Blue Herons. Snail Kites cruised in all directions and as we walked the quiet waterways, Striated Herons were positively numerous. Patches of scrub and aquatic vegetation yielded Yellow-chinned Spinetails, Yellow-bellied Elaenias and even a pair of Greater Anis. Straight-billed Woodcreeper and Spotted Tody-Flycatcher, both new for our trip, were seen very well amongst the wealth of birds present. A Barred Antshrike, also new, was superb, and a Black-collared Hawk provided excellent photographic opportunities. However, the rare Blood-coloured Woodpecker, an astonishingly coloured *Veniliornis* found only in the Guianas, was elusive. This rare and beautiful species is restricted to a narrow belt of habitat along the coastal plain and is regularly recorded in the Botanic Gardens and in some years nests there. Undeterred, we stayed until dusk enjoying the atmosphere as well as the birds, before returning to the comforts of our hotel, a sumptuous dinner by the pool and several celebratory drinks.

**Birds recorded in the Georgetown Botanic Gardens and surrounding areas:**

Magnificent Frigatebird (1), Little Blue Heron (10), Tricoloured Heron (1), Cattle Egret (525), Striated Heron (15), Black-crowned Night-Heron (50), Snail Kite (40), Black-collared Hawk (1), Southern Lapwing (2), Wattled Jacana (12), Rock Pigeon (10), Ruddy Ground-Dove (6), Red-shouldered Macaw (2), Orange-winged Parrot (24), Blue and yellow Macaw (2), Yellow-crowned Parrot (1), Greater Ani (2), Smooth-billed Ani (15), Ringed Kingfisher (1), Lineated Woodpecker (1), Crimson-crested Woodpecker (2), Yellow-chinned Spinetail (4), Straight-billed Woodcreeper (2), Barred Antshrike (1), Yellow-bellied Elaenia (3), White-headed Marsh-Tyrant (1), Spotted Tody-Flycatcher (1), Southern-beardless Tyrannulet (1), Great Kiskadee (25), Grey Kingbird (6), Tropical Kingbird (10), Lesser Kiskadee (2), Grey-breasted Martin (10), House Wren (4), Tropical Mockingbird (10), Pale-breasted Thrush (3), Yellow Warbler (2), Greyish Saltator (1), Yellow Oriole (5), Carib Grackle (20), Giant Cowbird (3), Shiny Cowbird (150).

**Mammals recorded:**

Wedge-capped Capuchin (8).

**Day 16 Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2005****Georgetown/Port of Spain, Trinidad/  
St Lucia/London**

Up before breakfast (some habits are hard to break!), we met up for some early morning birding along the seafront. In the strong onshore breeze, a large flock of Magnificent Frigatebirds gathered overhead, before drifting out to sea to pursue a distant fishing boat. As we strolled along the promenade, Semi-palmated Plovers fed along the tide-line, whilst distant Royal Terns fed offshore.

Having worked up an appetite, we felt ready to tackle our promised feast of a breakfast. After a veritable banquet, it was time to depart and with our luggage packed we set off on our city tour.

It was a very enjoyable experience to stroll along the tree-lined avenues, admiring the colonial homes built entirely of tropical hardwood and sporting the unique Demerara shutters. The network of drainage sluices was intriguing, and at one sluice gate, we found at least 20 pairs of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons nesting in some adjacent bushes, and nearby numerous Tricoloured and Little Blue Herons, and Snowy Egrets fed on an abundance of small fish in the intertidal shallows.

We visited many of Guyana's finest historic buildings, but perhaps most memorable was a visit to Saint George's Cathedral, built in 1892 with a roof made of English Oak and sides of Guianan Greenheart, it is one of the world's tallest free-standing wooden buildings.

We drove through the famous Stabroek Market, once described as the 'bizarre bazaar', where every conceivable item from household goods to gold jewellery was on sale.

Finally, it was time to head out to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport for our flight to Trinidad. After a smooth check-in, some duty-free shopping and an inevitable delay, we were eventually on our way flying over the Atlantic Ocean and across the Caribbean.

We boarded our onward flight from Trinidad and departed on time, landing in St Lucia to pick up more passengers, before continuing our flight to London.

**Birds recorded in Georgetown:**

Magnificent Frigatebird (28), Snowy Egret (24), Little Blue Heron (2), Tricoloured Heron (9), Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (40), Snail Kite (10), Yellow-headed Caracara (1), Semi-palmated Plover (16), Spotted Sandpiper (4), Royal Tern (3), Rock Pigeon (20), Common Ground-Dove (26), Ruddy Ground-Dove (4), Plain-bellied Emerald (1), Yellow-chinned Spinetail (1), Pied-Water Tyrant (1), Great Kiskadee (6), Rusty-margined Flycatcher (2), Grey Kingbird (2), Grey-breasted Martin (15), Tropical Mockingbird (2), Bananaquit (1), Palm Tanager (2), Turquoise Tanager (2), Blue-black Grassquit (1).

**Day 17 Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005****Heathrow, London**

We arrived ahead of schedule safe and sound after a relaxing flight. A wonderful time and a very successful first Naturetrek tour of Guyana.

**GUYANA 2005 – Full Mammal List**

Red Howler Monkey  
Guianan Saki  
Wedge-capped Capuchin  
Squirrel Monkey  
Black Spider Monkey

Common Opossum  
Red-rumped Agouti  
Capybara  
Savannah Fox  
Nine-banded Armadillo  
Giant Anteater  
Giant Otter  
Neotropical Otter  
Brazilian Tapir (dung and footprints only)  
Jaguar (footprints only)  
Ocelot (footprints only)  
Bull Dog Bat spp.  
Sac-winged Bat spp.