

An Ornithological Survey of Mt. Holitipu, Guyana, February 2007

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After 13 years of work in Guyana by Smithsonian ornithologists surveying far reaching lands of interior Guyana, there were still a number of interesting Guyana records, confirmed by specimens, that we had been unable to verify with modern records. This expedition, undertaken by Brian Schmidt and Christopher Milensky of the Smithsonian Institution and Elford Liverpool of the Guyana Environmental Protection Agency sought to survey one of the few remaining habitats in the country we had not sampled. We chose an area in the Cuyuni/Mazaruni where there is high elevation or 'alpine' savannah. This type of habitat is rare in Guyana and is only known to exist in a small part of the country near the Venezuelan border and the Gran Sabana. Our research led us to previous botanical expeditions to Mt. Holitipu just north of the village of Paruima, where this type of high elevation, tepui top, savannah has been documented.

Funding was secured from the Biodiversity of the Guianas Program and the Division of Birds at the Smithsonian Institution. Approval was granted from the Guyana EPA as well as from the village of Paruima and the expedition took place from 9 February through 1 March 2007. After a charter flight into Paruima on 09 Feb, the bird survey was conducted for 16 days on Mt. Holitipu from 12 Feb through 27 Feb using porters and workers from the village to assist with the transportation of goods to the mountain. We returned to Georgetown by plane on 1 Mar 2007.

The top of Mt. Holitipu encompasses a very large area of savannah, scrub, gallery forest and 'bush islands' ranging from 3500-4000 feet in elevation. We chose to conduct our field work at the northern end of the mountain top near where botanist David Clarke had found many unusual species of plants and where there was known to be a good water source and old camp. (5° 59' 03"N 61°02' 43" W) See attached map. There was also some tall gallery forest in the area where we hoped to find a mixture of forest, edge, and savannah birds.

We recorded 100 species of birds on the mountain top (see species list below), of which two were previously unknown to exist in Guyana. One species is the Tawny-headed Swallow (*Alopochelidon fucata*) and the other is the Pearly-vented Tody-tyrant (*Hemitriccus margaritaceiventer*). Both species have distributional ranges around Guyana and extend as far south as Argentina and are known to occur in the adjacent savannahs of Venezuela. Based upon vocalization activity and reproductive condition, it appears these birds are breeders in Guyana rather than austral migrants.

In addition to the two new species for Guyana, we confirmed three species that had previously not been recorded by our efforts, although specimen and literature records exist. These species are the Hooded Siskin (*Carduelis magellanica*), the Black-billed Thrush (*Turdus ignobilis*), and the Bearded Bellbird (*Procnias averano*). Also, we found the Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*) to be one of the most common birds

in these high savannahs, where we had previously only documented it on a few occasions and always in small numbers.

Not surprisingly, our species list contains several tepui specialists (eg. *Thamnophilus insignis*, *Macroagelaius imthurni*, *Herpsilochmus roraimae*, *Caprimulgus whitleyi*, *Hylophilus sclateri*, and *Heliodoxa xanthogonys*) and many savannah species (eg. *Emberizoides herbicola*, *Ammodramus humeralis*, *Sporophila minuta*, *Synallaxis albescens*, and *Sturnella magna*). Although, at this site we did not find forest capable of supporting species you might normally expect to find in forest at this elevation. Our numbers for Flycatchers, Antbirds, Ovenbirds are particularly low. It is possible these species only occur on the slopes of the tepuis and not in the gallery forest or tepui scrub on the tepui tops. Despite this site having some of the lowest diversity we have come across in Guyana, there are a number of unusual species with very restricted ranges that occur here in great numbers, making this site of very special interest.

In conjunction with the observational data, our species list includes 49 species of birds caught in our mist net surveys. As computed from the table below, we set an average of 18.4 nets/day for an average of 164 net hours/day. (Nets were generally open from 7am to 5pm each day.) Each day we caught an average of 25.6 birds representing an average of 13 species. Our overall catch rate was 0.156 birds/net hour (or 1.4 birds/net/day). This catch rate, although seemingly low, is fairly comparable with other catch rates we have experienced in Guyana.

Date	Nets	Net Hours	Species	Number of Birds
13-Feb-07	14	112	7	15
14-Feb-07	18	162	14	20
15-Feb-07	20	200	12	21
16-Feb-07	20	210	10	19
17-Feb-07	20	188	12	17
18-Feb-07	12	108	17	34
19-Feb-07	16	160	17	28
20-Feb-07	16	160	19	48
21-Feb-07	18	180	17	47
22-Feb-07	18	180	18	27
23-Feb-07	18	180	5	7
24-Feb-07	18	180	13	16
25-Feb-07	20	130	11	16
26-Feb-07	24	216	15	52
27-Feb-07	24	96	7	17
Total		2462	49	384

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Mt. Holitipu Species List

Abundance Codes

- C Common - more than 20 individuals encountered daily
 F Fairly common - 5-20 individuals encountered daily
 U Uncommon - present in small numbers (<5 individuals/day) and not encountered daily
 S Scarce - only occasionally encountered in small numbers
 X notes only one specimen or encounter

Genus Species	Common Name	Abundance	Specimen
Tinamou (Tinamidae)			
Tinamus major	Great Tinamou	S	
Crypturellus variegates	Variiegated Tinamou	S	
Vultures (Cathartidae)			
Coragyps atratus	Black Vulture	S	
Cathartes aura	Turkey Vulture	U	
Cathartes melambrotus	Greater Yellow-headed Vulture	U	
Sarcoramphus papa	King Vulture	X	
Hawks (Accipitridae)			
Elanoides forficatus	Swallow-tailed Kite	X	
Buteo magnirostris	Roadside Hawk	U	
Buteo albicaudatus	White-tailed Hawk	U	Y
Falcons (Falconidae)			
Caracara plancus	Crested Caracara	U	
Milvago chimachima	Yellow-headed Caracara	U	
Herpetotheres cachinnans	Laughing Falcon	U	
Falco femoralis femoralis	Aplomado Falcon	S	Y
Guans (Cracidae)			
Ortalis motmot	Little Chachalaca	F	
Rails (Rallidae)			
Micropygia schomburgkii	Ocellated Crake	U	Y
Sandpipers (Scolopacidae)			
Gallinago paraguaiae	South American Snipe	X	
Gallinago undulata	Giant Snipe	S	Y
Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)			
Columba speciosa	Scaled Pigeon	U	
Columba cayennensis	Pale-vented Pigeon	U	
Parrots (Psittacidae)			
Ara chloropterus	Red-and-green Macaw	F	
Amazona amazonica	Orange-winged Parrot	C	

Cuckoos (Cuculidae)

<i>Tapera naevia</i>	Striped Cuckoo	U	
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Nightjars (Caprimulgidae)

<i>Caprimulgus cayennensis</i>	White-tailed Nightjar	X	Y
<i>Caprimulgus whitelyi</i>	Roraiman Nightjar	F	Y

Swifts (Apodidae)

<i>Cypseloides phelpsi</i>	Tepui Swift	F	Y
<i>Streptoprogne zonaris</i>	White-collared Swift	U	

Hummingbirds (Trochilidae)

<i>Phaethornis augusti</i>	Sooty-capped Hermit	S	Y
<i>Phaethornis boucieri</i>	Straight-billed Hermit	S	Y
<i>Doryfera johannae</i>	Blue-fronted Lancebill	F	Y
<i>Florisuga mellivora</i>	White-necked Jacobin	S	Y
<i>Chlorostilbon mellisugus</i>	Blue-tailed Emerald	U	Y
<i>Thalurania furcata</i>	Fork-tailed Woodnymph	F	Y
<i>Amazilia fimbriata</i>	Glittering-throated Emerald	X	Y
<i>Heliodoxa xanthogonys</i>	Velvet-browed Brilliant	F	Y
<i>Calliphlox amethystina</i>	Amethyst Woodstar	S	Y

Trogons (Trogonidae)

<i>Trogon personatus</i>	Masked Trogon	U	Y
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Toucans (Ramphastidae)

<i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i>	Channel-billed Toucan	S	
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Woodpeckers (Picidae)

<i>Picumnus exilis</i>	Golden-spangled Piculet	U	Y
<i>Piculus rubiginosus</i>	Golden-olive Woodpecker	F	Y

Ovenbirds (Furnariidae)

<i>Synallaxis albescens</i>	White-throated Spinetail	F	Y
<i>Xenops minutus</i>	Plain Xenops	S	Y
<i>Sclerurus rufularis</i>	Short-billed Leaf-tosser	X	Y

Woodcreepers (Dendrocolaptidae)

<i>Dendrocincla fuliginosa</i>	Plain-brown Woodcreeper	X	Y
<i>Sittasomus griseicapillus</i>	Olivaceous Woodcreeper	U	Y
<i>Xiphorhynchus pardalotus</i>	Chestnut-rumped Woodcreeper	U	Y

Typical Antbirds (Thamnophilidae)

<i>Thamnophilus insignis</i>	Streaked-backed Antshrike	F	Y
<i>Herpsilochmus roraimae</i>	Roraiman Antwren	F	Y
<i>Formicivora grisea</i>	White-fringed Antbird	S	Y
<i>Hypocnemis cantator</i>	Warbling Antbird	F	Y
<i>Hylophylax poecilonota</i>	Scaled-backed Antbird	U	Y

Ground Antbirds (Formicariidae)

<i>Myrmothera simplex</i>	Tepui Antpitta	S	Y
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Tyrant Flycatchers (Tyrannidae)

<i>Elaenia ruficeps</i>	Rufous-crowned Elaenia	F	Y
<i>Mionectes macconnelli</i>	McConnell's Flycatcher	F	Y

Hemitriccus margaritaceiventer	Pearly-vented Tody-tyrant	F	Y
Todirostrum cinereum	Common Tody-flycatcher	S	
Tolmomyias sulphurescens	Yellow-olive Flatbill	X	Y
Phylloscartes nigrifrons	Black-fronted Tyrannulet	S	Y
Myiophobus fasciatus	Bran-colored Flycatcher	U	Y
Myiophobus roraimae	Roraiman Flycatcher	S	Y
Myiarchus swainsoni	Swainson's Flycatcher	F	Y
Conopias parva	Yellow-throated Flycatcher	X	
Tyrannus melancholicus	Tropical Kingbird	U	

Cotingas (Cotingidae)

Procnias alba	White Bellbird	F	
Procnias averano	Bearded Bellbird	U	

Manakins (Pipridae)

Chloropipo uniformis	Olive Manakin	F	Y
Xenopipo atronitens	Black Manakin	U	Y
Pipra suavissima	Orange-bellied Manakin	F	Y

Vireos (Vireonidae)

Hylophilus sclateri	Tepui Greenlet	F	Y
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Jays (Corvidae)

Cyanocorax cayanus	Cayenne Jay	U	Y
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Swallows (Hirundinidae)

Alopochelidon fucata	Tawny-headed Swallow	F	Y
Hirundo rustica	Barn Swallow	U	Y

Wrens (Troglodytidae)

Thryothorus coraya	Coraya Wren	F	Y
Troglodytes aedon	House Wren	U	Y

Thrushes (Turdidae)

Turdus ignobilis	Black-billed Thrush	F	Y
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Wood Warblers (Parulidae)

Setophaga ruticilla	American Redstart	U	Y
Myioborus castaneocapillus	Tepui Redstart	S	Y

Bananaquits (Coerebidae)

Coereba flaveola	Bananaquit	F	Y
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Tanagers (Thraupidae)

Schistochlamys melanopsis	Black-faced Tanager	S	Y
Tachyphonus phoeniceus	Red-shouldered Tanager	C	Y
Tachyphonus surinamus	Fulvous-crested Tanager	X	Y
Rhamphocelus carbo	Silver-beaked tanager	S	Y
Thraupis episcopus	Blue-gray Tanager	U	
Thraupis palmarum	Palm Tanager	U	
Tangara cayana	Burnished-buff Tanager	F	Y
Dacnis lineate	Black-faced Dacnis	X	
Cyanerpes caeruleus	Purple Honeycreeper	F	Y
Cyanerpes cyaneus	Red-legged Honeycreeper	U	Y

Emberizine Finches (Emberizidae)

<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>	Blue-black Grassquit	S	Y
<i>Sporophila minuta</i>	Ruddy-breasted Seedeater	F	Y
<i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>	Yellow-bellied Seedeater	X	Y
<i>Oryzoborus angolensis</i>	Lesser Seed-finch	U	Y
<i>Emberizoides herbicola</i>	Wedge-tailed Grass-finch	F	Y
<i>Arremon taciturnus</i>	Pectoral Sparrow	S	Y
<i>Ammodramus humeralis</i>	Grassland Sparrow	F	Y
<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>	Rufous-collared Sparrow	C	Y

New World Blackbirds (Icteridae)

<i>Sturnella magna</i>	Eastern Meadowlark	X	
<i>Macroagelaius imthurni</i>	Golden-tufted Mountain-grackle	F	Y
<i>Psarcolis decumanus</i>	Crested Oropendola	S	
<i>Psarcolis viridis</i>	Green Oropendola	U	Y

Cardueline Finches (Fringillidae)

<i>Carduelis magellanica</i>	Hooded Siskin	S	Y
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