

# Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report November 6—18, 2025 | by Dave Mehlman



**Guides: Garey Sway and Dave Mehlman, with participants:  
Anne, Bob, Dave, Dean, Diane, Garrett, Pamela, and Vicki**

## **“We Bird Watching”**



### **Thur., Nov. 6 Arrivals in Georgetown | Georgetown National Park**

Our intrepid group arrived at various times around “zero-dark-thirty” today or on prior days and met for an informal breakfast at the lovely Cara Lodge in downtown Georgetown. After breakfast and before our afternoon activity, many in the group looked for birds in and around Cara, finding a Plain-bellied Emerald (which turned out to have a favorite perch in a palm tree outside the entrance), Blue-black Grassquit, Pale-breasted Thrush, and



the ubiquitous (and noisy) Great Kiskadee. In mid-afternoon, our guide Garey Sway came by with two vehicles, and we went on our first outing of the tour to the Georgetown National Park near the coast in town, negotiating some of Georgetown's formidable traffic along the way. The park, although mostly used for recreational purposes, provided a great start to the tour and we found many Snail Kites, Yellow-headed Caracara, a large Western Cattle-Egret colony, Southern Lapwing, Black-collared, Gray-lined, and Great Black Hawks, a Pied Water-Tyrant, some Yellow-chinned Spinetails foraging in the grass, and a Straight-billed Woodcreeper. Not bad for a start! We then returned to the Cara, freshened up, and met for a tour orientation and a group dinner at the patio bar. After that, it was off to our rooms to rest for the early start the next day.

### **Fri., Nov. 7 Mahaica River | Georgetown Botanical Gardens**

We were up in the pre-dawn darkness today for our first full day in the field. Our fleet of vehicles arrived and off we went through the city and west along the coast, before turning south to head inland. After a short drive through a farming area, we arrived at the departure site for our trip on the Mahaica River. Our able captain and guide, Naresh, came across from his house on the other side, and we went over to use the facilities and prepare for a morning on the water. Easily distracted by birds, however, we racked up some species right from Naresh's porch, including Blood-colored Woodpecker (endemic to coast northeastern South America), Green-tailed Jacamar, Wing-barred Seedeater, Yellow Oriole, and Red-breasted Meadowlark. Not bad for standing around!

Everyone ready, we climbed back onto the boat and headed off for a marvelous two-hour trip up the Mahaica River, birding along the way. This river is famous for finding Hoatzin, Guyana's national bird (locally known as Canje Pheasant), and boy, did we find Hoatzins! Dave's conservative count during the trip was 48 different birds—they were really out and showing well this morning, perhaps due to cloudy weather and overnight rain. Plenty of excellent viewing and photography of this unique and charismatic species. Also present during the trip were Little Cuckoo, more Blood-colored Woodpeckers, several Guianan Red Howler Monkeys, a pair of Black-capped Donacobius, Red-capped Cardinal, Barred and Black-crested Antshrike, a Sungrebe right in front of the boat, Olive-gray Saltator, and Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture. A fabulous trip and indicator of the avian and wildlife richness in store for us in Guyana. Returning to Naresh's house, we enjoyed a great feast of East Indian food with excellent roti, fresh fruit, and coffee for those interested. Of course, we birded while eating, adding a dashing Long-winged Harrier, White-tailed Goldenthrout, and Shiny Cowbird to our list before departing. As we made our way back to the Cara Lodge, we stopped at the Seawall in the community of Non-Pareil for some mudflat and mangrove birding. The many Scarlet Ibis dotting the mudflats provided a dramatic color contrast to the browns and greens of the surrounding habitats. Careful observation and scope work yielded a lot of coastal species, including Hudsonian Whimbrel (it's new name!), Rufous Crab Hawk (another coastal South American endemic), Osprey, lots of Lesser Yellowlegs with a few Greater's thrown in, a gathering of Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Semipalmated Plover, and a few Magnificent Frigatebirds soaring overhead. We then returned to the Cara Lodge for lunch and a brief break.



About mid-afternoon, we gathered in the downstairs lobby at the Cara Lodge ready for an afternoon outing and with our large bags to be transferred to our next destination by car. Everyone appeared to handle their “separation-from-stuff anxiety” quite well, I must say! Our vehicles soon arrived and we went off to the Georgetown Botanical Gardens for another sweet afternoon of birding. This lovely spot, a well-known birding destination in town, produced several new species for us, including Solitary Sandpiper, lots of Gray Kingbirds, Orange-winged and Yellow-crowned Amazon, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Crested Oropendola, White-bellied Piculet, Spotted Tody-Flycatcher, and the very showy Toco Toucan. As dusk slowly descended on the Gardens, we made our way back to the waiting vehicles and negotiated our way through the traffic to the Cara Lodge. Upon return, we met on the patio for our daily checklist and dinner, then headed off to the rooms for the evening.

## **Sat., Nov. 8 Georgetown Seawall | Kaieteur Falls | Surama EcoLodge**

Although today was a travel day, our flight to Interior Guyana was not until early afternoon, so we had a bit of a leisurely breakfast at Cara before checking out. After being picked up, we headed to the Georgetown City Airport, also known as Ogle airport, with a stop at the seawall by Georgetown Hospital for some final coastal birding. The seawall stop was quite productive as many, many birds were out and about on the mudflats. Sightings included many Scarlet Ibis, lots of Lesser Yellowlegs, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Sandpiper and Plover, Common and Gull-billed Tern, a pair of Bicolored Conebills attracted to playback, small flocks of Yellow-hooded Blackbirds, and a fly-over Peregrine Falcon. From there, we drove to the airport, went through security at a private hangar, and proceeded to wait for our flight to be called, nibbling on some sandwiches while we waited.

At last, our flight was called and we walked out to the Cessna Caravan for the 1-hour flight to Kaieteur Falls, passing over Georgetown but then rapidly leaving the city behind as we passed over extensive forests, punctuated by rivers and (unfortunately) a few gold mines. Landing at the airstrip, we found quite the crowd there, with five other planes sitting along the runway. Climbing out, we had a chance to use the facilities and then started our walk to the falls, stopping on a side trail in the forest along the way to look for Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock. As we got closer to the spot, one incredibly bright-colored male flew off into the woods, and at the designated area, we could see several of these amazing birds perched in the trees, calling occasionally. Although our observation was interrupted by another large tour group who insisted on getting cell phone photos of the birds, we got decent looks and photos of what I can only describe as a bright orange football with wings, feet, eyes, and tufts everywhere!

After getting our fill of the cock-of-the-rocks, we walked to one of the viewpoints over the falls and admired the view of this impressive cascade on the Potaro River, one of the tallest free-falling waterfalls in the world. We also noted a few Greater Yellow-headed Vultures patrolling the skies over the canyon. Unfortunately, due to our relatively late arrival, we had to head back to the plane after observing and photographing the falls. We then



climbed back on board and continued our way, soon landing at the airstrip in Surama Village. We were met there by our drivers, Devon and Renford, and taken to the Ecolodge, where we got a welcome drink and a briefing, then hauled our stuff (which had already been transferred there by road) to our cabins. We ended the day with a short walk on the grounds of the Ecolodge before dusk, finding and hearing Lesser Nighthawk, Great and Cinerous Tinamou, Common Pauraque, and some Yellow-crowned Amazons. We ended the day with our checklist, discussion of plans for the next day, and a lovely buffet dinner. Then, off to our rooms for our first night in the Interior.

## **Sun., Nov. 9 Surama EcoLodge**

We began our first full day at Surama with an early breakfast as the sky began to lighten, then gathered our gear for a morning walk on the legendary Borro-Borro Trail. Starting from the lodge itself, we walked through the savannah area surrounding the buildings, finding Channel-billed Toucan, Red-and-green Macaw, Pompadour Cotinga, and Crane Hawk perched in some far away trees. Moving through the savannah, Garey pointed out a roosting Lesser Nighthawk on a branch and Swallow-winged Puffbirds perched in the trees. As we approached the forest, some in the group spotted a few Cayenne Jays foraging in the trees, as Band-rumped Swifts and Orange-winged Parrots flew overhead. As we walked further into the tall forest, the birds kept coming and coming—this walk proved to be the single most productive outing of the tour with 64 species recorded in total. A few memorable highlights included Purple-throated Fruitcrow, White-crowned Manakin, Brown-bellied Stipplethroat, several Guianan Warbling-Antbirds, Guianan, Buff-throated, and Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Black-chinned and White-browed Antbird, Fasciated Antshrike, Great Jacamar, Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, and a heard Capuchinbird. Indeed, the avian richness of these forests was something to be discovered! Returning from our morning walk back at the lodge, we enjoyed a well-deserved lunch and then took a short break.

Reconvening late in the afternoon, we climbed into the vans and headed out for some birding along the Surama entrance road. Even the roadside birding here was great, as we quickly spotted foraging Southern Rough-winged Swallows, Finsch's Euphonia, Scaled Pigeon, Black-throated Mango, Tropical Gnatcatcher, and a family of Crimson-crested Woodpeckers. We ended the walk with a stroll out into the savannah as Lesser Nighthawks began their crepuscular foraging flights and some Red-and-green Macaws flew off slowly to their evening roost. As dark fell, we traveled on a bit further to a spot Gary knew about, walked carefully into the woods with our flashlights, and then had great looks at a Tawny-bellied Screech-Owl that responded to playback of its calls. We closed out this memorable day by returning to the lodge for our checklist, dinner, and review of plans for the following day before calling it a night.

## **Mon., Nov. 10 Surama EcoLodge**

Today started with another breakfast at dawn, after which we drove in the vans a short distance to the start of another trail through the woods, roughly parallel to the one we walked the previous day. Our objective on the



walk today was to get to a boat landing on the Burro-Burro River in order to take a boat trip. The forest, a bit less active today, nevertheless yielded some interesting birds, including the usual Screaming Piha “chorus,” White Hawk, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, and Reddish Hermit. A variety of Antbirds, including Gray, Black-chinned, and Ferruginous Antbird, plus Mouse-colored Antshrike and White-flanked Antwren were heard only, kind of par for the course in these forests.

Arriving at Carahaa Landing on the river, we found two boats waiting for us at the base of the stairs—the boat drivers had hiked out separately. Distributing ourselves between the boats, we then started a 2-hour trip, navigating numerous deadfalls across the river (relatively narrow due to the low water levels). One such deadfall was so large that everyone had to climb out onto a tree, let the boats pass, and then get back in the boats! Fortunately, we could bird while the pilots navigated, and we found a lot of great riverine birds such as Ringed, Amazon, and Green Kingfisher; Sungrebe, Sunbittern, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Cocoli Heron, Great Black and Gray-lined Hawk, and lots of White-banded Swallows. We also periodically flushed small groups of Proboscis Bats from their roosts on the underside of trees. Eventually, we pulled off to the right bank, tied up the boats, and went on-shore. Climbing up to the top of the riverbank, we then took a short hike through the forest to a picnic table at an overlook by the river. The view on the other side was of a massive Ceiba tree with a huge Harpy Eagle nest in it. We set up at this spot and began to wait—the eagle pair here had raised an almost fully-grown fledgling which was still regularly in the area, although the adults had moved on. At first, all was very quiet and still, except for the intermittent songs of Screaming Piha and Plumbeous Pigeon. Garey and some of the boat crew went off to search the surrounding forest for the chick, while the group waited with assistant guide Ravi. Suddenly, Ravi triumphantly announced that he had the eagle chick! With some help, everyone was able to find the perching bird and we managed to put the scopes on it for great views of this species, one of the most sought-after raptors in the Neotropics. After a long while, the bird flew a short distance into the nest tree, providing stunning looks and photo opportunities of this magnificent species.

Having had our fill of this super bird, we decided to leave it in peace and returned to the boats for the return trip back over the tree-filled river. Between the various boats, we added Green-and-rufous Kingfisher and Pied Puffbird to our daily bird list before arriving back at the boat landing. Once ashore, we started the hike back along the forest trail to return to the vehicles and the lodge. Although the time of day was not great, we started the hike with a Lineated Woodpecker and later we encountered a mixed-species flock. This became the subject of a great deal of attention on our part and Garey and Ravi worked the flock pretty hard. We heard clearly, and some in the group glimpsed, a Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo (one of the mega-target species for a Guyana trip); we also got everyone on a White-plumed Antbird and attempted to see, but only heard, Rufous-throated and White-browed Antbird. While crossing over the bridge on the trail, we spotted another Green-and-rufous Kingfisher to top off the hike. Arriving back at the vans, we had a quick drink, then drove back to the Lodge for a late lunch.



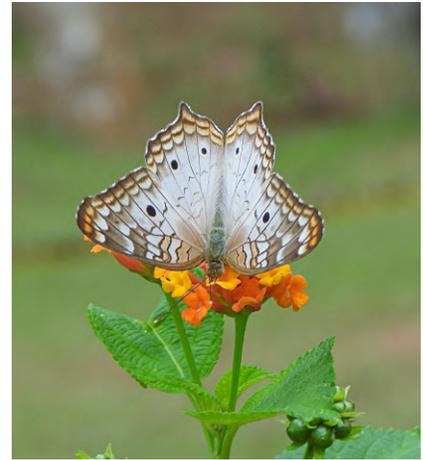
After a break, we met Garey, Devon, and Renford again and drove to Surama Village for a short talk on the mysteries of Cassava. We learned about the various varieties of cassava, both bitter and sweet, and how it was processed to take it from a large, potentially poisonous tuber, into an edible flour. This included peeling and washing the tuber, grating it, stuffing the matapi (an elongated sieve made of palm fiber), squeezing it to extract the juices, and then the cooking. We admired the skills of the cook to make cassava bread and enjoyed a small taste before returning to the lodge at dusk, flushing Common Pauraque and White-tailed Nightjar along the way. We then did our usual daily checklist, settled our bills, and enjoyed our last dinner at Surama before turning in.

## **Tues., Nov. 11 Surama EcoLodge | Rupununi River | Atta Rainforest Lodge**

After bringing our gear up to the main building and getting a quick cup of coffee early in the morning, we packed up and headed out for a full day in the field. Our first stop was a place called Kwatamang Landing on the broad Rupununi River where two boats were waiting for us. As we got ready to leave, we ate our packed breakfasts on the beach and headed out for a wonderful 3+ hour boat trip on this river. The birding was great, starting with a large flock of Black Skimmers and Large-billed Terns on a sandbar right off the landing. Waterbirds abounded, as might be expected, with Pied Plover, Southern Lapwing, and Spotted Sandpiper on the sandy shores, a wide variety of herons and egrets (including several Capped Herons, new for the tour list), Green Ibis, Anhinga, Osprey, and groups of Red-capped Cardinals. Some of the special highlights during the trip included an Agami Heron lurking in some dense riverside brush, a roosting Common Pauraque, several Boat-billed Herons at their day roost, Aplomado and Bat Falcon, and a Pale-legged Hornero lured into view with playback. Several huge Black Caimans were spotted cruising around the still water of an inlet and, best of all, a pair of Giant River Otters foraged along the shore, close enough for us to hear them snorting.

Returning to land, we thanked our boat drivers and got back in the vans, and then made our way to our next destination, Atta Rainforest Lodge, making numerous birding stops along the highway as we drove. Although approaching mid-day, these stops yielded a variety of nice birds, including a perching White-tailed Kite, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Ground-Dove, a Gray-cowled Wood-Rail posing nicely at the edge of a pond, Pearl Kite, and Glittering-throated Emerald. Garey also pointed out a Gold Tegu lizard sneaking into its burrow to add to our herp list. We soon arrived at Atta Rainforest Lodge, located in a clearing in the forest, received a briefing from Carlon, the resident bird guide, and then put our gear in our rooms. At that point, Garey said he had found an army ant swarm near the lodge, so off we went to the edge of the clearing. However, at that point, few birds were around with the exception of a Plain-brown Woodcreeper. We then had our first buffet lunch in the lodge dining room and then took a break for unpacking and a bit of exploration.

Meeting up in the late afternoon, we boarded the vans and drove out to the main Rupununi Road and spent some time road birding. This walk was pretty productive and we found several new species for the tour such as



Purple and Red-legged Honeycreeper, Blue Dacnis, Short-crested Flycatcher, Green Aracari, White-throated Toucan, and Rufous-throated Sapphire. However, the walk ended after about an hour due to a steady rainfall, so we returned to the lodge. After a bit of uncertainty about next plans, the rain stopped and we made an attempt at a night walk primarily to find White-winged Potoo. However, the woods and road were very wet and nothing responded to the potoo playback. We then returned to the lodge for a late checklist followed by dinner.

### **Wed., Nov. 12 Atta Rainforest Lodge**

We began the day with early coffee and a snack in the dining room and, when it was light enough, we joined Carlon for a walk to the canopy walkway through the forest. The woods were pretty quiet, aside from a few calling Screaming Pihias and Plumbeous Pigeons. After climbing the 200 steps up the ridge, we started out, one-by-one, on the canopy walkway. Crossing over two bridges, the group arrived at the second platform (due to a treefall, this was the end of the walkway at present). Unfortunately, it proved to be a pretty quiet morning on the walkway, with the highlight being a distant, perched White-faced Hawk. In addition to that, only a few Greater Yellow-headed Vultures, Red-and-green Macaws, Dusky Parrots, and a Black-spotted Barbet were found. We then returned to the lodge (with Carlon demonstrating the use of the Macushi “telephone” along the way) for breakfast.

After breakfast, the group went out with Carlon again on a loop hike through the forest around the lodge. Although the woods continued to be relatively quiet, we found the resident Black Curassows which hang out in the neighborhood, the only Black-tailed Trogon of the tour, Channel-billed Toucan, Common Squirrel-Cuckoo, and a small group of White-lipped Peccaries. After our walk, we returned to the lodge for lunch and a short break. After the break, we began a session of clearing birding around the main lodge building. The weather had improved, so this birding turned up, as time went on, a variety of interesting birds in the surrounding trees including Pompadour Cotinga, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Golden-sided Euphonia, Paradise Jacamar, Yellow-tufted and Golden-collared Woodpecker, Green Oropendola, and Purple Honeycreeper. To finish the day, we loaded up in the vans and headed out to the main road for some more birding, stopping at a variety of spots both south and north of the Atta entrance road.

To the south, the birding was pretty slow, though one van spotted a Black Caracara perched in a roadside tree and a stop at the white-sand forest yielded a Bronzy Jacamar, a white-sand forest specialist. To the north, it was more productive. A stop at a bridge had Blue-headed and Black-headed Parrot, and a final stop along the road produced Spix’s and Marail Guan, a pair of very noisy Red-throated Caracaras, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, Black-tailed Tityra, and more Green Oropendolas. As dusk set in, we enjoyed sundowners courtesy of Renford while we waited until dark for an owling attempt. Unfortunately, a long session playing Black-banded Owl



produced nothing but insects in response, so we returned to the lodge, did our daily checklist, and then had our final buffet dinner at Atta.

### **Thur., Nov. 13 Atta Rainforest Lodge | Karasabai | Manari Ranch**

Today began with a very early start due to the length of the drive to our first site. After a quick coffee and snack, we loaded all our bags and were wheels rolling a bit after 4:00am on our long trip. The first part of this trip was in darkness during which we passed out of the Iwokrama Forest and collected our pack lunches at Surama Junction. As it became light enough to see clearly, we periodically stopped as we drove south on the Rupununi Road for birds spotted in trees or in roadside ponds. Among several stops, we had nice views of White-tailed Hawk, Jabiru and Maguari Stork, Aplomado Falcon, Azure Gallinule briefly spotted at the edge of a pond, and a well-concealed Pinnated Bittern. We then left the highway on the dirt road to Karasabai Village making our breakfast stop on the way at a large wetland dominated by Moco-Moco (*Montrichardia arborescens*, family Araceae) called Moreiru Pond. As we ate our breakfast sandwiches and enjoyed a morning coffee, we spotted a few birds at the site, including Purple Gallinules perched high in the moco-moco, Snail Kite, Savanna Hawk, Greater and Lesser Kiskadee, and a White-tailed Goldenthrout.

We continued on to the village, stopping along the way to tally a small group of Green-rumped Parrotlets by the road. In the village, we picked up our local community guide and then entered the foothills surrounding the village to begin birding. We spent almost 2 hours in this arid valley, close to the border with Brazil, finding a variety of species. We had brief sightings of our primary avian target, the Sun Parakeet, occasionally perching in trees before flying off. Other species found included a Pearl Kite, White-tailed and Gray-lined Hawk, Blue-tailed Emerald, Ochre-ored Flatbill, Pale-eyed Pymy-Tyrant, and Tropical Gnatcatcher; many of the smaller birds were attracted to playback of Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl calls. In fact, those calls attracted an owl or two to us for great views! After this morning outing was finished, we drove back to Karasabai Village for lunch on the patio in someone's house. After eating, the sharp-eyed observers noticed a few Bicolored Wrens wandering around, along with some American Kestrels.

After lunch, we climbed aboard the vans to complete the rest of the trip to our final destination for the tour, Manari Ranch. As we drove out on the dirt secondary road to the highway, we made several stops as Garey attempted to find a Bearded Tachuri for us. Although we had no luck with the Tachuri, we did get decent views of Crested Doradito (a small, wetland-associated flycatcher with an odd, patchy distribution in South America) along with Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, Buff-necked Ibis, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Grassland Sparrow, and a bunch of Barn Swallows, apparently still migrating south. Eventually, late in the afternoon, we arrived at Manari Ranch, had a welcome drink, and put all our gear in our rooms. We then got together for a walk around the ranch house grounds to explore our new surroundings. We soon discovered what a joy it is to bird in this open savannah habitat, finding Brown-throated Parakeet, Red-shouldered Macaw, Yellow-crowned Amazon, Glittering-throated Emerald, hordes of Pale-vented Pigeons, Orange-backed Troupial, Yellow Oriole, Burnished-



buff Tanager, and a Blackpoll Warbler (a long way from home!). We then returned for a short break, convened for our daily checklist, and then concluded with a family-style dinner in the dining room of the ranch house.

### **Fri., Nov. 14 Manari Ranch | Takutu and Ireng Rivers**

We began today with our usual early breakfast as it was starting to get light. Today would be dedicated to exploring remote parts of Manari Ranch, primarily in search of a few rare and range-restricted species. Therefore, due to the poor road conditions, we had three drivers meet us in 4-wheel drive trucks for our day in the field. After finishing off breakfast, we distributed ourselves among the vehicles and headed off for the day. Almost immediately we spotted a lovely male Hepatic Tanager perched in a tree right along the road, a fun addition to our bird list (and the only one of the tour). Another stop a bit further on at a wetland in the savanna yielded a bunch of wild Muscovy Ducks, Jabiru, Vermilion and Fork-tailed Flycatcher, several Savanna Hawks, and a distant, perched Long-winged Harrier. Continuing on, we drove through some abandoned rice fields (with the 4-wheel drive vehicles demonstrating why we needed them) and, as we drove along, the lead car spotted a Jaguarundi skulking through the savannah! We stopped and looked carefully and most in the group were able to catch a glimpse of this rarely seen cat. Finally, we arrived at our first “target” birding site of the morning near the junction of the Ireng and Takutu Rivers. Taking a short walk into the scrub, Garey worked his playback magic and lured a pair of the very range-restricted Hoary-throated Spinetail out for decent views and some photos. Also present were a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Bananaquit, and a few Tropical Mockingbirds.

Having knocked one of the targets off our list, we continued on a short distance to the riverine gallery forest near the Ireng River to look for the other, the Rio Branco Antbird. Continued effort at this site, including use of direct playback and the owl call, produced amazingly good views of a male Rio Branco Antbird, about as good as one could hope for. Other birds present and attracted to the commotion included Common Tody-Flycatcher, Black-crested and Barred Antshrike, Buff-breasted Wren, and Glittering-throated Emerald. Having completed our “target sweep,” we spent the rest of the morning visiting various sites across the vast expanse of savannah to find more birds. One focus of search was the Yellowish Pipit, a bird of extensive grasslands, and we had success with that one, finding several as we walked as a group through the grass. We also visited a variety of wetlands scattered throughout the savannah. Some of the species found during the morning included White-faced Whistling-Duck, plenty more Muscovy Ducks, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Buff-necked Ibis, Limpkin, Red-breasted Blackbird, Azure and Purple Gallinule, and Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture.

As the morning ended, we returned to the Ranch, thanked our drivers, and then enjoyed lunch in the dining room followed by an afternoon break. Toward late afternoon, we loaded up in our vans again and headed into the town of Lethem (paved roads!!) for some birding in the gallery forest by the river on the edge of town. Using the owl tape, we were able to find a variety of things, including Blue-tailed Emerald, Burnished-buff Tanager,



Brown-crested Flycatcher, Shiny Cowbird, Ashy-throated Greenlet, Northern Yellow Warbler, and Ochre-ored Flycatcher (plus the usual Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl coming in to see what the fuss was all about). As dusk fell, we returned to the Ranch, making a road stop along the way for nightjars. As we stood and watched, admiring the sunset on the savannah, we were able to find both Nacunda and Least Nighthawk as they flew by, adding some great species to our caprimulgid list. Upon our return to the ranch, we met for our daily checklist followed by dinner and then retired for the night.

## **Sat., Nov. 15 Nappi Village | Manari Ranch**

Our birding site for the morning was the small village of Nappi in the foothills of the Kanuku Mountains. Due to the length of the drive, we were up early for coffee and then left the Ranch early when it was still dark. We drove out the Manari Ranch entrance road to the highway, then turned north until we headed off on the dirt roads to the east towards the mountains and Nappi Village. Our first sighting of the day proved to be one that we had been looking for the entire tour: a Giant Anteater! The lead vehicle spotted it first and we all promptly stopped got out and watched it amble through the savannah. Finally, one of the “giants” of Guyana was on our species list. After this top, we swung by Nappi Village to pick up a local guide and then drove through some agricultural fields to the area where we would be birding. At this point, we broke out our pack breakfasts and coffee before beginning a few hours of birding. While we ate, a local family was gathering and beginning to prepare for a “meal on the farm” so to speak, with one of the gentlemen bringing in a stringer of fresh caught fish for all to enjoy. The walk here was quite productive as we explored the forests, wetlands, and road. The most interesting bird here was a lone Horned Screamer, apparently the only one of its kind in all of Guyana, that had taken up residence in the wetland. We had great views of it as it perched high in a dead tree and occasionally “screamed.” Other great sightings in the area included a sweet pair of Black-capped Donacobius, Hooded and Turquoise Tanager, Chivi Vireo, Cayenne Jay, numerous Crested Oropendolas, Scaled Pigeon, Lineated Woodpecker, Forest and Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Spotted Puffbird, Golden-spangled Piculet, and White-bellied Antbird. We also got a chance to see cassava plantations up close and see a little bit of what village life looked like in rural Guyana. At the end of the morning, we loaded back up the vans, checked out at the village office, and then returned to Manari Ranch for lunch and a break.

During the break, several in the group explored the Ranch area on their own, finding (or seeing again) many of the species regularly occurring there such as Brown-throated Parakeet, Bicolored Wren, Yellow Oriole, Orange-backed Troupial, and Palm, Blue-gray, and Burnished-buff Tanager. Toward the end of the afternoon, we boarded the vans for a visit to a large lake adjoining a massive moriche palm swamp on a nearby ranch, the JR Ranch. As might be expected, the wetland attracted many birds and, best of all, several Capybara. Careful work with the scopes and binoculars turned up Black-bellied and White-faced Whistling-Duck, Muscovy Duck, Collared Plover, Anhinga, Spotted and Least Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Snail Kite, Yellow-billed Tern, and a Pantanal Snipe. As the sun began to set, numerous Red-bellied Macaws flew by, apparently on their way to roost sites in



the palm swamp. As dusk began to settle in, out came the nighthawks, with several Lesser and a few Least Nighthawks putting in an appearance. As it became dark, we began our trip back to the ranch, but not without spotting a Double-striped Thick-knee scurrying off the road, clearly visible with the car headlights. We arrived back at the ranch after this fantastic day in the Rupununi, did our daily checklist, and then enjoyed a late dinner before heading off to our rooms.

### **Sun., Nov. 16 Moco-Moco Village | Manari Ranch**

Today began with breakfast at the more-or-less normal time and then we got in our vans and headed to a different village near the Kanuku Mountains, though one a bit closer than the previous day. After the usual drive over dirt roads, we arrived at Moco-Moco Village and picked up our local guide for the morning. We then drove a bit further on the road and parked by a large wetland and commenced birding. The combination of open habitats and wetlands produced a great bird list. Many species were by now familiar to us, like Ringed, Amazon, and Green Kingfisher; Black-collared, Roadside, and Gray-lined Hawk; Crested Oropendola; and Hooded, Silver-beaked, Blue-gray, and Palm Tanager. But, we had fantastic views of some new things, most notably a Cream-colored Woodpecker that cooperatively perched in a dead tree for great views and photos. Other good birds were a Greater Ani (the only one of the tour), Streak-headed Woodcreeper, several Giant Cowbirds (a parasite of oropendola nests), and Violaceous and Finsch's Euphonia.

We then drove further toward the mountains and past the wetlands, parked the vans, and walked along an old road known as the Sky Valley Waterfalls Trail. This walk through the forest eventually ended at an open picnic/recreation area at the base of some scenic cascades over huge boulders, also providing great birding. Highlights here included a Copper-tailed Hummingbird, a King Vulture, Green-tailed Jacamar, Painted Parakeet, a pair of Northern Slaty-Antshrikes, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Riverbank Warbler, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, White-collared Swift, and Yellow-margined and Ochre-ored Flatbill. In addition to the birds, Peter's Lava Lizards were abundant on the large boulders, from which they gave us the classic lizard side-eye and pushups. At the conclusion of the walk, we returned to the vehicles, thanked our local guide, and then returned to the ranch for a brief stop before heading to lunch in neighboring Brazil.

We drove down the highway, through Lethem (noting the large number of stores there, apparently mostly catering to a Brazilian clientele), crossed over an overpass bridge which allowed us to switch easily from driving on the left to driving on the right, crossed the Takutu River, passed without an issue through Brazilian border control, and continued into Roraima State a short distance. We then turned off the highway to head to our lunch stop, the Fazenda Buritizal Grosso located on the shores of a large lake. Everyone got in line to help themselves at the large buffet (food here was priced by the kilogram, but the watermelon was free!) and we proceeded to feast on the results. After lunch, we walked around the grounds of the Fazenda and shores of the lake to add Brazilian birds to our trip list. Between our walk at the Fazenda and some birds seen by the lake coming and



going, we had 25 species in Brazil for the tour. A few of these were not seen at all in Guyana, such as Zone-tailed Hawk (a fly-over at the Fazenda) and Pied-billed Grebe, so this trip provided not only a fun lunch in another country but some extra birds as well.

We then returned to the ranch for a brief break, then met again in late afternoon for a walk around the ranch grounds until sunset. During the walk we encountered a large group of Smooth-billed Anis, Yellow-crowned Amazons flying to their night roosts, Fork-tailed Palm-Swift, Burnished-buff Tanager, Blackpoll Warbler (probably the same individual as seen previously), and the usual crowd of noisy Bicolored Wrens. As dusk fell, we got nice views of a Least Nighthawk flying back with its trailing white wing edges on the ranch airstrip. We then finished the day with our checklist, dinner, and then off to our rooms to begin packing and turn in for the night.

## **Mon., Nov. 17 Manari Ranch | Fly to Georgetown**

Our last day at Manari Ranch began with a later breakfast as we did some final organizing of our bags and paid our bills. After breakfast, the group took a final walk around the ranch grounds, encountering “the usual suspects” such as Glittering-throated Emerald, Red-shouldered Macaw, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Yellow Oriole, and Burnished-buff Tanager. One new species added this morning was Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, perhaps not that spectacular, but still new for the list! After the walk, we had an early lunch at the ranch, said our good-byes to the ranch staff, and then loaded everything in the vans for the trip to the Lethem airport. After a short wait, we all checked in at the very small terminal building, and then sat in the waiting room until our plane arrived from Georgetown. After boarding, it was a bit over a hour flight back to the Ogle Airport in Georgetown. Upon arrival, we passed through Guyanan immigration, got our bags, and then met our drivers to be taken back to the Cara Lodge. Once there, we checked into our rooms, did the final arranging of gear for international travel, and then enjoyed a final dinner together in the Lodge’s patio bar/dining room.

## **Tues., Nov. 18 Departures from Georgetown**

The entire group left today, a small number very early in the morning on red-eye flights back to the US and most of the group on a morning flight back to Miami. We enjoyed our company during this epic adventure and left with interesting memories of this fascinating and less-visited South American country, its people, and its wildlife.

*Photos: Group (David Mehlman - DM), Guianan Cock-of-the-rock (Anne Pierce - AP), Channel-billed Toucan (AP), Black Caiman (AP), Striated Heron (AP), Guianan Red Howler (AP), Hoatzin (AP), Kaieteur Falls (DM), Mahaica River boat (DM), Sunbittern (AP), Harpy Eagle (DM), Common Pauraque (AP), Group Birding (DM), Black-necked Aracari (AP), White-throated Toucan (AP), White Peacock (AP), Jabiru (AP), Sun Parakeet (AP), Blue-tailed Sapphire (AP), Black-capped Donacobius (AP), Spotted Puffbird (AP), Crested Oropendola (AP), Scarlet Macaw (AP), Red-shouldered Macaw (AP), Cream-colored Woodpecker (AP), Buff-necked Ibis (AP), Orange-backed Troupial (DM)*