

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen



With Local Guide Leon Moore, Keith Hansen, and participants Kirk, Clifton, Margaret, Karl, John, Paul, Goly, David, and Dottie



Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen



Before my accounting of the Naturalist Journeys 2018 tour to Guyana, I want to personally thank the many, many people who helped to create this incredible experience. First, my heartfelt thanks, goes to Peg Abbott and the ENTIRE staff at Naturalist Journeys and to everyone on the ground in Guyana. From the caring and efficient hotel and lodge staffs to the tireless and gifted food preparers, to the brave taxi drivers and skilled boatmen, to our faithful crew of able and experienced drivers, every expert local-guide and then finally, Leon. On so many levels, this trip just could not have been what it was without his steady, patient, and knowledgeable guidance. We were truly in good hands.

To the nine fellow participants on this adventure, I want to say to each and all of you that it was my pleasure to share this trip with you. Your involvement, powers of observation, sharp eyes, and quick directions all helped to broaden our horizon, thereby increasing the enjoyment and expanding the richness of the collective experience. Thank you.

Sun., Feb. 25 Arrival in Georgetown | Cara Lodge

While some arrived the day before, our group of nine participants gathered today for the official start of our Naturalist Journeys' tour at the Cara Hotel in Georgetown, Guyana. After a delicious meal and a bit of refueling at Cara, we drove through town to the expansive, lush, and beautifully laid out Georgetown Botanical Gardens for some afternoon birding. This afforded us a comfortable pace to get reacquainted with some familiar species and enjoy the thrill of the sights of the new and unusual.

Stepping from the cars and into the warm tropical sun, our group was instantly greeted by the raucous calls and flashes of green and red from various species of parrots including the Yellow-crowned, Orange-winged, Mealy, and Festive. Brown-throated Parakeet and Red-shouldered Macaw rounded out the list. The warm air gave lift to the many birds of prey that hung on thermals or perched on the trees in and around the forest's edge. Always on the prowl, vocal Yellow-headed Caracaras, along with numerous Snail Kites moved about while a hunting Zone-tailed and a perched Gray-lined Hawk were enjoyed. Cloaked in black and orange hues, the uniquely patterned Black-collared along with a high flying Rufous Crab Hawk showed their colors. Interesting species with curious names were pointed out by Leon. While a pair of Black-capped Donacobius displayed, a Yellow-chinned Spinetail worked the lotus flowers as a White-bellied Piculet gleaned at a bromeliad nearby. Our attention was drawn away when the aptly named and uniquely local species, the Blood-colored Woodpecker suddenly flew in. Flycatchers were out in force, like the inveterate Great Kiskadee and Tropical Kingbird. Rusty-margined, Short-crested,

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen



Social and Boat-billed Flycatchers, along with Yellow-bellied Elaenia and Pied Water-Tyrants were studied for their oft subtle differences.

Other colorful and varied species we saw today included: Toco Toucan, Violaceous Euphonia, Green-throated Mango, Glittering-throated Emerald, Striated Heron, Wattled Jacana, Yellow Oriole, Lineated Woodpecker, and Wing-barred Seedeater. Somehow familiar species seemed to put things in perspective so it was comforting when birds like House Wren, Yellow Warbler, Snowy Egret, or Osprey were seen. Heck, even Rock Pigeons blasted past as a Great Horned Owl hooted in the distance. It was then back for dinner and a much-needed rest.

Mon., Feb. 26 Mahaica River | Botanical Garden

Rising predawn, we clambered into our faithful vehicles and drove an hour to the Mahaica River. As day broke, we got quick views of Amazon Kingfisher, Cocoli Heron, and Wood Stork. Emerging from the vans we were greeted by a passing squadron of Short-tailed Swifts and numerous White-winged Swallows.

In the cool morning air, we slipped into the long boat and glided down river. Almost instantly, Leon teased out and into view, two unfailingly furtive birds, a pair of Barred Antshrikes and a male Silvered Antbird. It seemed to all come at once as a cooperative Crested Caracara with a thin twig of nesting material came into view. Next, a passing Fork-tailed Flycatcher, several Barn Swallows and the seemingly inebriated antics of the many Hoatzins triggered laughter as camera shutters whirred. Little Cuckoos were in good numbers, as were Red-capped Cardinals. The boat idled to a stop when birds like the Grayish Saltator, Ringed Kingfisher, Lesser Kiskadee, and a glittering Green-tailed Jacamar came into view. Three Red Howler Monkeys sat calmly and afforded beautiful views.

When lunch time arrived, we stopped at the home of a welcoming family who had prepared a wonderful East Indian meal for our group. As glossy Carib Grackles inflated in display, distant Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures coursed low over the flooded grassland habitat. Docking the boat, we climbed up the bank to the cars, only to find two aggressive hummingbirds at a flowering bush that turned out to be a dueling White-tailed and Green-tailed Goldenthrout! Suddenly, a strikingly beautiful, dark morph male Long-winged Harrier passed close by. Next, we drove to the Victoria Village Sea Wall, attempting to get better

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen



views of a Rufous Crab Hawk. As Magnificent Frigatebirds hung lazily on the intensifying heat, we suddenly spotted a snake-carrying Little Blue Heron being pursued by a hungry Yellow-headed Caracara. A perched Roadside Hawk and a Tricolored Heron standing on the bow of a fishing boat held our attention until a Spotted Tody-Flycatcher with its “too much coffee” eyes, gave us the once over. Scopes clattered in rapid response when Leon located not one, but two very obliging Crab Hawks.

Then, it was off to the Cara Hotel for a bit of rest. Evening found us back at the Botanical Gardens where we enjoyed more birds of prey with a lofty Peregrine, a distant Bat Falcon, a nearby Pearl Kite, and a good-natured Laughing Falcon. This evening we enjoyed dinner and drinks at the Cara Hotel.

Tues., Feb, 27 Flight to Kaieteur Falls | Surama Village

We were up early with our first stop, the Ogle Mud Flats for long legged waders and shorebirds. While still early in the day, the flats gave off heat waves making sharp views difficult. Most mudflat birds are a combination of gray, brown, black, or white, so it was lifting to see the punctuation of rose from numerous Scarlet Ibis. A flock of Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpipers formed the nucleus of the shorebirds as a few Black-bellied Plover, Willet, and Whimbrel worked the edges, while at a distance Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Laughing Gulls, and Royal Terns sat on posts.

Then it was off to Ogle Airport where we boarded our chartered flight from Georgetown to Kaieteur Falls. Rising above a city of colorful roofs, then out and over rice fields, we found ourselves drifting over expansive swaths of mature rain forest until Kaieteur Falls came into view. Taking a couple of passes above the frowning precipice of the great fall, the pilot gave us breathtaking views before adroitly putting down the aircraft on a rather short looking runway. We were greeted by the staff and guides at the headquarters and given welcome refreshments. Heading toward the lip of the falls we stopped when birds presented themselves. A cooperative Rufous-crowned Elaenia, as well as a flock containing Green Honeycreeper, Bananaquit, a Racket-tailed Coquette, and a Fork-tailed Woodnymph were enjoyed. The contrast of seeing the rare and tiny Golden Frog nestled deep within a giant bromeliad next to the full force and grandeur of Kaieteur Falls was striking. While it was effortless to gaze in awe upon the tallest waterfall on earth, it was however not easily described, but from our perch near the lip we soaked it in.

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen

Suddenly Leon pointed out a pair of boldly patterned Cliff Flycatchers who sadly did not pose long. The avian star was without a doubt the trio of Guianan Cock-of-the-rocks that afforded us all somewhat cryptic but memorable views as they moved about their lek. Time short, we hustled back to the plane for our flight over much more jungle and to Surama Village. Picked up and taken to this wonderful lodge, we soon settled into our new environs. Watching the sun set and enjoying a refreshment we recorded a whole new set of species. Memorable species included Fork-tailed Palm-Swift, Savannah Hawk, Plumbeous Kite, Yellow-rumped Cacique, White-throated Toucan, Swallow-winged Puffbird, Red-and-green Macaw, and calling Lesser Nighthawks. Dinner, the list and ... tired to bed.



Wed., Feb. 28 Surama Lodge & Environs

Up, breakfast and out early for a day focused on the species of the deep rainforest with an attempt to specifically find a Harpy Eagle adult or chick at its nest. We drove to the trail-head, awkwardly disrupting a pair of mating Great Black Hawks. After a mile of quietly walking through a forest with cathedral-like grandeur, we reached the nest, which unfortunately was without chick or adult. One keen participant found the skull of a monkey beneath. Scarlet Macaws flashed out and screeched through the canopy, affording tantalizingly brief views. Heading back through the deep forest we soon encountered a diverse feeding flock containing Wedge-billed, Chestnut-rumped, and Buff-throated Woodcreepers, several vocal Cayenne Jays, a Gray Antbird, Cinnerous Antshrike, and a Plain Xenops. As a Screaming Piha... well, screamed, we emerged from the deep green as a King Vulture soared above and a trio of large Black Curassows scurried from the road. It was then back to the lodge for much needed refreshments, food, and a nap.

In the afternoon, we went on a Great Potoo quest that paid off handsomely when one of the local guides deftly teased one of the great, gray, fluffy, almost muppet-like birds from the lacework of branches above. While soaking it in and photographing, other birds moved through the canopy, most notably Blackpoll Warbler, Blue Dacnis, Green-backed Trogon, Striped Woodcreeper, and Tropical Gnatcatcher. We moved out into an open savanna area pocked with a pond or two where we enjoyed a small group of Yellow-bellied Seedeaters and one Ruddy-breasted Seedeater feeding in the grass. Flying from the pond were two Green Ibis that they shared with a Sulphury Flycatcher and a Lesser Kiskadee. In the long light, we walked back toward the lodge, encountering a distant Green Aracari as well as several fly-over Scaled Pigeons. The day ended with a perched, singing, and scoped Lesser Nighthawk while a Common Potoo called from somewhere deep in the forest's darkness. Dinner and sleep.

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen



Thurs., Mar. 1 Surama Village | Burro Burro River

This morning we were up early for a full day of exploring. After a hearty breakfast, we climbed into the trucks for a short drive to the Burro Burro River trail. It wasn't long before our faithful leader Leon heard, summoned forth, and provided views of both a Rufous-capped Antthrush and the exquisitely plumaged Ferruginous-backed Antbird with its slow but purposeful "Rail-like" carriage. Calls from a distant Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Ruddy Pigeon, and a passing Long-tailed Hermit kept heads cocked in hopes of a view.

Arriving at the dry wash of the Burro Burro we were surprised to see a very freaked-out group of a half a dozen Gray-winged Trumpeters running across the wash and away into the forest. A Golden-headed Manakin paused for a nice view as our first Crested Oropendola passed overhead. Ahead in the distance came the curious and utterly bizarre cow-like "moo" of the Capuchinbird. Soon in view, two of these bald, football sized, coffee-with-cream colored cotingas came in to size us up. Suddenly Leon threw himself onto the ground to get a better view of a large shape that flew in and landed. Hushed excitement reigned as he put an Ornate Hawk-Eagle in the scope. We emerged from the forest for some water and nourishments laid out on the tailgates by our wonderful drivers. Next, Leon took us to a very productive stretch of forest where in rapid fire we added such wonderful species as a Black-tailed Tityra, numerous Red-rumped Caciques, a lofty Swallow-tailed Kite with several Greater Yellow-headed Vultures, a calling Gray-fronted Dove, and a quick pass from Golden-winged Parakeets.

A short drive to yet another "whirlwind" of new species found us gazing in wonder at the royal purple and white Pompadour Cotinga, one White-winged and several Spotted Tanagers, a bounding Squirrel Cuckoo, a calling Channel-billed Toucan, and an all-too-brief fly over of two Red-fan Parrots. Attention was diverted when a trio of vocal Black Nunbirds suddenly appeared for an impromptu performance. Additional showstoppers included two Waved Woodpeckers and the unlikely color scheme from a pair of Cream-colored Woodpeckers. Additional "tree-huggers" included a Cinnamon-throated and an Amazon Barred-Woodcreeper. At the lodge, a Short-tailed Nighthawk closed the curtain on the day as another fine dinner was served. Bed beckoned and sleep was had.

Fri., Mar. 2 Surama Lodge | Atta Lodge

Even though one feels they have given a location a pretty "good going over," it is surprising when you step outside of your room on the third day and entirely new birds show up, and NOT small ones either!

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen



A roosting Spix's Guan sat for all to enjoy nearly above the lodge and a very distant but utterly identifiable Blue-throated Piping-Guan greeted the dawn.

An early breakfast and a good bye to the hardworking staff at the Surama Lodge and we were off. Once again, we stopped along the seemingly endless corridor of forest when Leon boldly pronounced "HERE" as his flock piled forth from the trucks. The morning forest was alive with birds streaming across the road and dripping from the trees. Band-rumped Swifts passed overhead as the "airbrushed" pattern of the Guianan Toucanet was appreciated. The raucous clanking and rattling from a Red-throated Caracara directed to the bird in full view as two huge Red-necked Woodpeckers mixed it up. Yellow-backed and Paradise Tanagers poured in along with a Red-legged Honeycreeper, a Black-spotted Barbet, and a Golden-collared Woodpecker. In a Cecropia clung a Pale-throated Three Toed Sloth munching on the tender shoots. Finally, a Guianan Trogon and a stunning male

Spangled Cotinga sat for several minutes letting us catch our collective breaths! Next, we walked up a trail to a large set of rocks where the apt named Cock-of-the-"rock" chose its lek. Quietly, we sat and were rewarded to stunning views of these exotic orange birds.

It was not long before we found ourselves at the Atta Lodge where we were welcomed into our rooms by the staff and seated for lunch. With free time, folks relaxed or wandered around the beautifully productive grounds of the lodge, enjoying the tiny Racket-tailed Coquette, the numerous Blue-headed Parrots, the curious Dusky Purpletuft, and several perched Marail Guans. An afternoon walk to a nearby bridge provided our group with repeated views of numerous species, as well as beautiful views of Black-headed Parrots. Night comes quickly near the equator and with darkness comes a changing of the guard. Once again Leon's magic produced spotlight views of a Black-banded Owl and several more Short-tailed Nighthawks. On our way to the lodge a brief view of a Blackish Nightjar, flushed from the road, and a distant calling Spectacled Owl were the final additions of the day.

Sat., Mar. 3 Atta Lodge | Canopy Walk

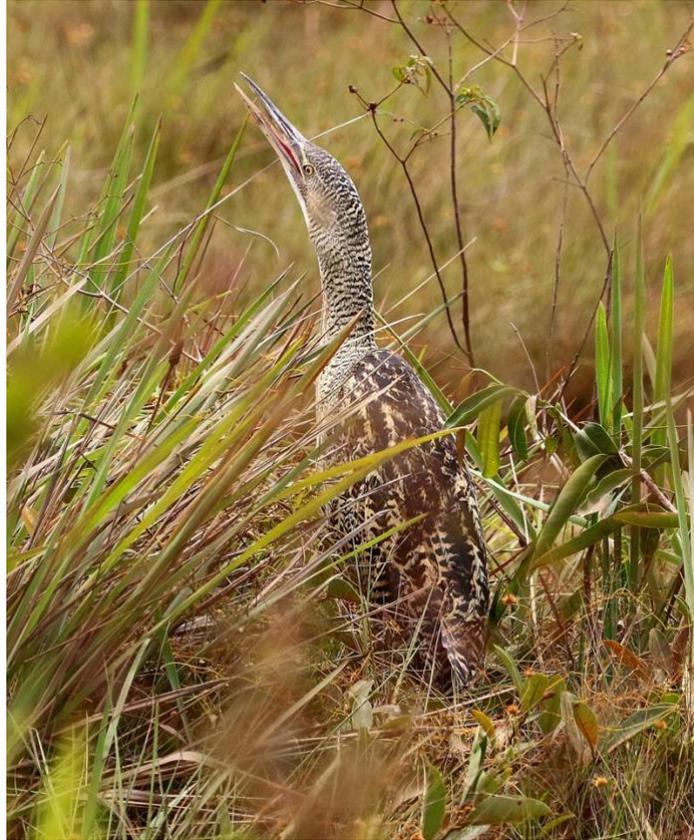
We enjoyed breakfast at the lodge, then a casual walk up and on to the elevated canopy walk where several suspended walks afforded our participants a lofty view of the forest from above. Upon getting to the walkway, the sky opened and a soft but steady rain ensued. Some participants enjoyed a Blue-backed Tanager but for the most part the birds laid low. We headed back to the lodge for refreshments.

After the rain stopped we walked through the forest to the bridge that we visited the evening before. On the way was a beautiful Ruddy Pigeon, a Guianan Woodcreeper and a Piratic Flycatcher. As the day

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen

warmed up and became more humid, we sought shade where several of us enjoyed two Dusky Parrots, a White-chinned Sapphire, and a strikingly plumaged Black-eared Fairy. Before we headed back for lunch, a final rush of new species included several Flame-crested Tanagers, a Black-bellied Cuckoo, and a female Purple-breasted Cotinga, while a Plumbeous Pigeon called. After a bite and some rest, we once again headed back to the infamous “bridge” where we watched a Rufescent Tiger-Heron, a perched Greater Yellow-headed Vulture, and a very thin pipefish and strange catfish swam below. Both a Ringed and an Amazon Kingfisher sat nearby.



With the day winding down and cooling off, activity picked up as a Bay-headed Tanager, a Purple Honeycreeper, a Black-throated Trogon, and a small feeding flock of beautifully colored Painted Parakeets displayed their finery. Our main target species, the Crimson Topaz, also made an appearance as two males jostled for their favored perch located right above the water, much to the delight of all the participants. Leon reached a milestone as his 600th species in Guyana, a male Lesson’s Seedeater made a quick appearance. Once again, after night fall, Leon produced above and beyond the call of duty when he brought a very cooperative Northern Tawny-bellied Screech-Owl out of the forest and to our attention with this dark eyed owl affording “walk away views.” Dinner and bed.

Sun., Mar. 4 Atta Lodge | Rock View Lodge

After an early breakfast and a good bye to the staff at the Atta Lodge we headed out. We made another stop at the Cock-of-the-rock trail head for great views of a Yellow-billed Jacamar. The next forest stop featured a Golden-headed and a Black Manakin, along with a well seen Northern Slaty-Antshrike. Still in deep forest, we stopped to spend one last moment in this diverse realm. It paid off when a Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle came in high from the clouds, flanked by units of Short-tailed Swifts. The transition from thick forest to open savanna came rapidly as we suddenly began to see species associated with grassland. Well-tailored White-tailed Hawks floated by while a supremely streamlined Aplomado Falcon streaked in and perched nearby. Southern Lapwings voiced their disapproval at our presence. Next, Leon caught a movement near the edge of the road when out strode a Pinnated Bittern for all to see. Before long we arrived at the Rock View Lodge and met the colorful owner who welcomed us into the world of his own making.

With open grassland as his canvas, he has created a wonderful lodge with lawns, lush plantings, a swimming pool, and a large central meeting and dining room. While folks got settled, a very vocal

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen



Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl kicked things off from the tree right out front as a Toco Toucan and an Orange-backed Troupial moved about. After getting settled we headed out for a productive afternoon with a drive to a nearby pond called Cambodi Bash. On our way, species added to the trip, included the familiar White-tailed Kite and Vermilion Flycatcher. Less familiar were the curious looking Buff-necked Ibis, the somber Brown-chested Martin, and the “identical twin” to our Grasshopper Sparrow, the Grassland Sparrow. At the bash, we enjoyed flocks of Orange-winged Parrots, a Green-tailed Jacamar, and a Striated Heron deftly using a small piece of meat as a lure to catch fish. A Gray-cowled Wood-Rail walked the edge as a Black-chinned Antbird worked the brambles. Driving back in the dark, small numbers of Least Nighthawks were spotted darting across the road. Dinner, the bird list, and for some a dip in the refreshing pool was had as a Tropical Screech-Owl serenaded.

Mon., Mar. 5 Rock View Lodge | Caiman House

While most would have liked another day or two at Rock View, schedule demanded we press on. After breakfast and good byes, we drove a short distance to refuel the vehicles and spotted a covey of Crested Bobwhite on the way. Well, as one thing often leads to another we all pulled over when a Brown Vine Snake was seen crossing the road. This docile creature got everyone out of the vans when we realized that we were surrounded by many birds of prey. While a single very obliging Laughing Falcon caught our attention, White-tailed, Roadside, and Savanna Hawks were in abundance with Black Vultures, a Zone-tailed Hawk, and a Pearl Kite in attendance as well as. Numerous Maguari Storks, some Limpkins, even two Muscovy Ducks made an appearance. It wasn't long after that we stopped at a bridge over a river when Leon played a Pygmy-Owl call to see what would happen. Well! Seems little birds responded with universal dislike for this “mock” owl. Making their grievances known were a Troupial, a Yellow Oriole, one Yellow-breasted and two Brown-crested Flycatchers, a local and beautiful pair of Finsch's Euphonia's, and yes, even a Pygmy-Owl.

We arrived at the Caiman House where folks found their rooms and relaxed or showered. After lunch Leon led us on a very productive walk to the river. As we approached the waterway, the shrouding forest provided us with great views of a restless Blue-backed Manakin, a comfortable Spotted Puffbird, a furtive Buff-breasted Wren and a vocal, nearly invisible White-bellied Antbird. Suddenly a Crane Hawk came in and perched, virtually above us. With the river in view, species like Solitary and Spotted Sandpiper, as well as a Green Kingfisher and several White-winged Swallows became part of the landscape, but the sight of a Pale-legged Hornero at water's edge seemed curious. Red-bellied Macaws screeched overhead, calling an end to the day while a White-throated Kingbird put on a show by hitting

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen

the water repeatedly. As a calling Undulated Tinamou faded in the distance, the lords of darkness emerged in force as Lesser, Least, Short-tailed, and numerous Band-tailed Nighthawks fed on the emerging insects. Dinner called, sleep beckoned.

Tues., Mar. 6 Caiman House | Savanna | Rupununi River

This would turn out to be a very big day! Up, an hour before sunrise and deep into the savannah, breakfast would have to come later. Blasting along in the dark we were excited to see numerous White-tailed Nightjars, a few Nacunda Nighthawks, even a Savanna Fox. Our goal was a wet area we wanted to explore for several unique species. Arriving, we were not disappointed! Birds came fast. In the cool dawn air, a Giant Snipe winnowed as numerous Eared Doves moved quickly past. Leon went into the water up to his knees, producing a Least Bittern and Pale-breasted Spinetail. A few glimpsed the unique Long-tailed Grassfinch but all enjoyed the Crested Dorodito. Purple Gallinule, Plumbeous Seedeater, and Yellowish Pipit came next.



Out of nowhere, a Giant Anteater suddenly came into view as shouts of joy went up! Excitement quickly dissipated when right behind the trotting creature, sat a man on a motorcycle driving the animal toward us. While nice to see such a fine creature, one with a personal escort left us somehow crestfallen. Later however, at our impromptu tailgate breakfast we were rewarded with three unchaperoned Anteaters foraging nearby. We were thrilled! Stopping at an isolated grove of trees we were rewarded with eight roosting White-tailed Nightjars. Farther on, we spotted a distant Jabiru nesting high in a giant tree not far from a duo of Burrowing Owls. Dusty and tired we returned to Caiman House and relaxed.

Rejuvenated, we later clambered aboard three long boats. Our quest, the Giant River Otter. Heading down river, we were pleased to see several Green Ibis and our first Pied Lapwings. White-banded Swallows, a Long-billed Starthroat, and a very close adult Great Black Hawk thrilled. Suddenly we encountered a scene with one Spectacled Caiman, two close Jabiru, a Little-blue Heron, a Solitary Sandpiper, and a Sunbittern all in one view! Nesting Nunbirds enhanced the scene with vocal antics. More kingfishers, hawks, swallows, and jacamars showed their colors. Suddenly shouts erupted as the boat men yelled "Otters!" For some, brief glimpses, for others, none. We quickly pulled onto a sand bar where the only right thing to do was to play their vocalizations in hopes of calling them back and then quickly get refreshing rum drinks into our hands. Well, the drinks worked, but not the recording. You win some and you lose some. We found several Boat-billed Herons and a perched Common Potoo on our return. Dinner and bed.

Wed., Mar. 7 Caiman House | Karasabai Village Manari Ranch

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen



Up early with the specific goal of driving to locate the rare and stunningly beautiful Sun Parakeet. Sadly, this “glowing sunrise” of a bird has suffered severely from the pet trade and our quest would take us to the center of hope for the preservation of this lovely bird. A long drive through the flatland savanna found us making our way into and through large mountains. Several Bicolored Wrens and two Double-striped Thick-knees were seen as we passed a pond with Purple Gallinules and White-headed Marsh Tyrant, then reached the Karasabi Village. We checked in at the government headquarters then picked up our local guide, Ali, at his home.

We drove into the hills, stopping at a wide canyon. We began a hot climb up and into the canyon. Aside from a Bananaquit, a few distant vultures and a Savannah Hawk, birds were quiet. Spirits were raised when Red-and-green Macaws came into the trees for good views. Always gallant, Leon did his best to issue a response from our sought for quarry with voice recordings, but alas, it was not to be. It was time to head back and perhaps check other spots, so we walked about half the way back to the cars when suddenly a screeching flock of six bright yellowish-orange parakeets passed overhead flying back in the direction from which we came. We quickly turned back into the sun and headed up the canyon. It wasn't long until the voices of these birds were heard and that's when Leon spotted them at a bit of a distance, but in full view. We were thrilled as everyone had “walk away views.” Heading back with smiles we had some refreshments at the cars.

Heading back toward town we got to a spot where the road was washed out, not allowing us to go any further. It was here that a few of us saw a Streaked Flycatcher. Turning back, we quickly hit the brakes as Leon spotted numerous Sun Parakeets VERY close to the road. Scopes went up as cameras clicked. Smiles and pats on the backs were had. Nearby a Long-tailed Hermit was seen. It was then off to Karasabi for lunch. Dropping off Ali at his house we spotted a Burrowing Owl perched on a fence wire. A long drive laid ahead until we finally arrived at the quiet Manari Ranch. Relaxing in the shade we sipped beer as we waited to get settled in our rooms. Like something from an old western movie this old ranch was literally in the middle of nowhere. Once settled, we enjoyed dinner and went over the rather short bird list for today. To bed.

Thurs., Mar. 8

Manari Ranch | Iring River | Letham Airport | Georgetown

Guyana: Unspoiled Wilderness | Trip Report

February 25 – March 9, 2018 | Written by Keith Hansen

Our last day of birding found us departing the Manari Ranch early and heading to the Iring River to search for two very local and endangered species. A short drive and this beautiful location was alive with sound. Right off the bat, Leon pointed out a singing Coraya Wren, as well as a very quiet “Crestless” or Lesser Razor-billed Curassow, which was not seen. Without missing a beat, Leon coaxed forth a Rio Branco Antbird, the first of our key species, quickly followed by the Hoary-throated Spinetail, our second! Next, while playing a Pygmy-Owl call, several birds, including a Lineated Woodpecker, a Streaked Flycatcher, a Pale-breasted Thrush, a Buff-breasted Wren, a Red-eyed Vireo, a Tropical Gnatcatcher, a calling Rufous-browed Peppershrike, and a Pale-tipped and a very vocal Southern Beardless Tyrannulet got into the mix. Silent, sudden, and stealthy, a Crane Hawk appeared as an ACTUAL Pygmy-Owl also arrived. Next it was off to some wetlands where we all enjoyed another big bump of incredible species.

Pulling around to the side with the best lighting, we were greeted with a very large flock of White-faced Whistling Ducks, a few Muscovy Ducks, and several Buff-necked Ibises. The lake was dotted with numerous Least and several Pied-billed Grebes. The big thrill for many of us were the 40+ Masked Ducks that hid amongst the floating vegetation. After refreshments and a very close flyby from a White-tailed Kite we headed to the next lake. Upon our arrival, a Limpkin flew across the pond while a couple of Pinnated Bitterns put on a “cryptic” show. One Grassland Yellow-Finch was spotted as it flashed past the Wattled Jacanas that walked upon the floating plants. Before departing the lakes edge, Leon arranged a flanking maneuver out and into the arid white sand habitat that encircled the watery oasis. He had a hunch. His hunch paid off well when we flushed a very large Nacunda Nighthawk and a very cryptic White-tailed Nightjar. Beyond those final bird sightings, it was time to get everyone safely and on-time, to the border with Brazil and the town of Lethem. Departing from the Lethem Airport, we flew back to Georgetown where we were picked up and whisked off to the Cara Hotel for our final bird list, drinks, dinner, and lively conversation, culminating with toasts to a fine trip! For many if not all, this was the first tour to Guyana. I can’t imagine a more successful, easygoing, and panoramic introduction to this beautiful country and its birds.

Photo Credits

Orange-winged Parrots, Cliff Hensel (CH); White-tailed Kite, CH; Toco Toucan, Leon Moore (LM); Burrowing Owl, LM; Sun Parakeet, LM; Red Howler Monkey, LM; Giant Anteater, Peg Abbott; Toco Toucan, LM; Hoatzins, LM; Kaiteur Falls, Narca Moore-Craig (NMC); Green Aracari, CH; Surama Village, NMC; Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, LM; Pinnated Bittern, CH; Laughing Falcon, CH; Jabiru, CH; Sun Parakeets, LM.