



**GUYANA**  
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# GUYANA BIRDING

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Guyana Birding Tourism Product Continues to Soar**

**GEORGETOWN** – Since the official launch in January 2006, the GTA-GTIS Birding Tourism Program has made great progress in helping to develop birdwatching tourism in Guyana, and to promote this sometimes under-appreciated South American country as a birdwatcher's paradise that remains beautifully undiscovered.

The Birding Tourism Program, which receives funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) program, is built on a market-led approach to developing Guyana's birding tourism sector.

Birdwatchers were identified as an ideal niche tourism market for Guyana because they are generally well-educated people with time and money to travel to sometimes off-the-beaten-path destinations in search of highlight bird species. Birdwatching also contributes to conservation by focusing on unique places, sustainable activities and small groups of people highly interested in nature and preservation. By bringing more birding tourism to Guyana, it also encourages local communities to conserve and protect their natural heritage, and can provide alternate employment options to more damaging jobs in areas such as logging, mining and the wildlife trade.

With a goal of bringing small groups of birdwatchers to Guyana, the birding program targets tour operators, birdwatchers and the media. Key participants in the program are USAID/GTIS, the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA), the Government of Guyana and Guyana's tourism private sector, especially those with a market-ready birding tourism product. Other partners include the Guyana Amazon Tropical Birds Society (GATBS) and the Iwokrama International Rainforest Centre.

All participants and partners have played vital roles to the success of the program thus far. GTA contributed money to the birding product familiarization (Fam) tours that brought international tour operators and media to Guyana, attended birdwatching trade shows and assisted with birding marketing materials. Private sector companies assisted the program through reduced-cost and in-kind contributions including accommodation and transportation necessary to make the Fam trips a success. The GATBS has provided the program with their local birding expertise and technical assistance.

### **Marketing**

The marketing aspect of the program has been essential in raising awareness of Guyana as a destination for birdwatchers. This has been done in part through the website, [www.guyanabirding.com](http://www.guyanabirding.com), which provides information on Guyana's birds, birding itineraries, bird checklists, trip reports and essential information on organizing trips to Guyana. The GuyanaBirdingNews, an electronic newsletter, is an off-shoot of the website and covers recent news and features profiles on Guyana's birds, birding sites and people important to the growth of birdwatching in Guyana. The newsletter is distributed four times per year to more than 1,300 readers throughout the world.

To help with the marketing effort, in April 2007 the project also funded the printing of a revised and updated second edition of *A Field Checklist of the Birds of Guyana* compiled by the Smithsonian Institution. The updated checklist, which had been out of print since 2002, includes a total of 814 species, including 30 new species not previously identified in Guyana.

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### Trade Shows and Events

In an effort to bring Guyana to the birdwatching market, the program has attended several trade shows including the American Birding Association convention in 2006 and 2007, the Adventure Travel Trade Association Summit in 2006, the North American Nature Photographer's Association annual show in 2007 and the British Birdwatching Fair (BBWF) in 2006. The birding tourism program will be hosting a Guyana booth at this year's BBWF (held August 17-19), which attracts more than 18,000 visitors and is touted as the world's first and largest international birdwatching event.

### Familiarization Tours (Fam Tours)

As tour operators must have an opportunity to experience Guyana's birds and tourism products firsthand before designing and selling a birding tour, Fam tours are one of the most important aspects of the birding tourism program. Thus far the project has organized three Fam tours for international tour operators and media; two more are currently being planned for November 2007 and April 2008. The Fam trips have been very successful in that nearly all participants left feeling impressed with Guyana's potential as a birding tourism destination, while wondering how it has remained overlooked for so long.



As a direct result of the Fam tours, seven companies have already introduced new tours to Guyana and an additional 10 companies are working on itineraries for 2008 and 2009. The Fam tours also helped to generate international press highlighting Guyana as a birdwatching destination. The articles have appeared in international magazines, websites, newspapers and tour operator catalogues and newsletters, and have reached an audience, and target market, of thousands.

The Fam tours have also brought in birdwatching experts with invaluable experience in the field. After the trips, participants provide feedback and constructive criticism to help improve and expand Guyana's birding tourism product. Many of Guyana's tourism destinations are now working to make their properties more birder friendly, through ways such as updating bird checklists, creating and expanding trail networks, training guides and planting flowers and fruit trees known to attract certain species of birds.

### Market-Led

A strong foundation has been laid and a niche tourism market for Guyana has been identified – visitors and tour operators alike have expressed a strong interest in visiting Guyana for its nature-based tourism. The Birding Tourism Program will continue its market-led strategy through its main initiatives – marketing, Fam tours, attending trade shows, helping to develop local birding products and the like – but all parties involved with the effort are looking forward to welcoming birdwatchers to Guyana, and watching tourism in the country grow as a result.



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