

PRESS RELEASE

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Guyana Represented at the American Birding Association Convention

Snowbird, Utah – For the third consecutive year, Guyana is featured at the annual American Birding Association convention, taking place from June 23-29 at Snowbird, Utah. Some 250 dedicated birdwatchers from around the United States have gathered at nearly 8,000 feet amongst the Wasatch Mountains just outside of Salt Lake City to attend workshops, watch presentations, peruse the trade show and go on birdwatching field trips.

Guyana's rainforests and savannas – a stark contrast to the surrounding mountains still dotted with snow – are on display at a booth dedicated to promoting birdwatching opportunities in the country that many admit knowing little about. On hand at the booth to answer questions are Iwokrama Ranger and Tourism Coordinator, Wally Prince; Manager of Wilderness Explorers, Teri O'Brien; President of Small Planet Consulting and tourism specialist for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) project, Judy Karwacki; and USAID/GTIS senior writer and author of the Bradt Travel Guide to Guyana, Kirk Smock.

Iwokrama Ranger and bird guide, Wally Prince, has been a great ambassador for Guyana. Besides using his field knowledge to discuss birdwatching in Guyana with interested birders, Prince has also been attending workshops and going on field trips with expert birdwatchers. Speaking of his experience in Utah, Prince said, "The ABA convention is an oasis of birding professionals and there is a diversity of birding equipment on display. The field trips were great learning experiences and beautifully executed."

Prince added that his experiences and knowledge gained at the convention, "will be shared in various ways with my fellow professional bird guides in Guyana to help us take those few additional steps to a level of international professional guiding. On a personal note, experiencing snow for the first time and birding on partially snow covered mountains at more than 9,000 feet is truly an experience to behold."

In addition to touting the birds of Guyana, the team has been holding several meetings with representatives from within the birdwatching industry, including optic companies and international tour operators. Lengthy discussions have also been held with important US publisher *Bird Watcher's Digest* and ABA officials.

As a result of similar meetings at past ABA conventions, Guyana has made key partnerships that have resulted in donations of birdwatching equipment for guides in Guyana, links to guide-training services, and important tour operators and media coming to Guyana to experience the birdwatching firsthand.

The ABA is an important organization in the birdwatching world, as their membership represents a range of birding interests, including education and conservation issues. The ABA also focuses on promoting the economic and environmental values of birding, and promotes and encourages the conservation of birds and bird habitats.

The Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative is receiving support from GTIS, a joint project of the Government of Guyana and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). For more information, please visit www.guyanabirding.com.

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