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GUYANA BIRDING



PRESS RELEASE

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Fact-Finding Trip by U.S. Tour Operator Reveals Guyana's Beauty

GEORGETOWN – “Opportunities to access the forest canopy are always valuable and sought after by birders,” said Narca Moore-Craig, “and Guyana has a world-class canopy walkway at Atta Rainforest Camp.” Ms. Moore-Craig, along with her husband and two friends, was in Guyana in March as part of a fact-finding trip for the tour operator Naturalist Journeys.

The trip was the second to Guyana for Ms. Moore-Craig; her first visit was last November when she came as part of a Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) – United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) project Birding Tourism Program familiarization tour organized by Judy Karwacki of Small Planet Consulting and Tony Thorne of Wilderness Explorers.

From March 2-17 the four biologists were in Guyana to experience a variety of the country's tourism offerings, including bird and butterfly watching, wildlife spotting and community tourism. While in Guyana they visited Georgetown, Iwokrama Canopy Walkway and Field Station, and Surama Village.

Ms. Moore-Craig said the purpose of her recent trip was to, “gain more experience with Guyana's habitats and birds, and to learn about additional excursions which might be worked into trips.” Moore-Craig also said that Naturalist Journeys is planning on bringing a group to Guyana in the spring of 2009.

Moore-Craig said exciting birds they spotted included the Crimson Fruitcrow, Pompadour Cotinga, Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock, White-winged Potoo and Raquet-tailed Coquette; mammals included Tayra and many monkeys. The butterfly enthusiasts on the trip were excited to see the “exquisitely beautiful” Helicopsis genus at the Georgetown Botanical Garden and at the Iwokrama Field Station.

In speaking about the Birding Tourism Program Moore-Craig said it, “brought Guyana to the foreground as a destination for [Naturalist Journeys]. Otherwise, we likely wouldn't have organized a tour here until some years later.”

Moore-Craig's recommendations for tourism in Guyana was to, “focus on the larger natural history market as well. And of course, preserving the integrity of the forest is essential to maintaining ecotourism.” And she added encouragingly, “Guyana seems to be headed in a good direction on that score, better than many countries.”

Input such as this from tour operators and media who have visited through the GTA-USAID/GTIS program in the past two years show that Guyana provides an excellent product-market match for several other sustainable nature and cultural tourism markets. To this end, GTA-USAID/GTIS is expanding its focus to several niche sustainable tourism markets; namely, nature and wildlife viewing, eco-indigenous tourism, and volunteer conservation tourism. The primary draw for all of these markets is the opportunity to experience Guyana's untouched and expansive rainforests.

To reflect the move into this new and exciting phase, GTIS has renamed the birding tourism program to the Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI). The GSTI 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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