



PRESS RELEASE

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Tour Operators The Travelling Naturalist and Bird Treks Report Guyana Trips Were Excellent

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA – “Excellent” and “Unbelievable” are how two international birdwatching tour leaders summed up their recent trips to Guyana. Tim Earl, a Principal Leader for the UK-based tour operator The Travelling Naturalist, and Bob Schutsky of US-based Bird Treks both reported that their clients were very pleased with their November birdwatching trips to Guyana.

Both leaders first visited Guyana on a tourism product familiarization trip sponsored by the Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI) – a joint project of the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) and the United States Agency for International Development/Guyana Trade and Investment Support (USAID/GTIS) project. Earl came in 2006 and Schutsky in 2007.

This was Bird Trek’s first tour to Guyana and Schutsky said his seven American clients went home thrilled with what they experienced. “The people on this tour were very well-traveled around the globe and had been to most of the more popular birdwatching destinations,” Schutsky said during a post-trip interview. “Everybody agreed that Guyana has unbelievable habitat, birds, and wildlife.”

On the Bird Treks tour the group visited Georgetown, the Abary River, Kaieteur Falls, Iwokrama International Centre, Atta Rainforest Lodge and Iwokrama Canopy Walkway, Rock View Lodge, and Dadanawa Ranch.

Schutsky said trip highlights included seeing the endangered Red Siskin near Dadanawa, having good looks at the Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock in three different locations, and the many bird species they saw at Atta Lodge, especially the Crimson Fruitcrow and White-plumed Antbird.

Speaking highly of Atta Rainforest Lodge, Schutsky said, “Several of my clients told me they would have liked to spend more time at Atta. The area produced a lot of our best birds and the eight new cabins are perfect. Atta has everything you need for excellent birdwatching.” The group also heard a jaguar right outside of camp at Atta but didn’t manage to see it in the early morning darkness.

Besides birds, Schutsky said his clients were also excited to see six species of monkeys, a freshwater stingray, creatures spotted on a nighttime boat ride, and many army ant swarms – particularly the one that produced six species of Woodcreepers and four of Antbirds.



Rainforest view from the Iwokrama Canopy Walkway.

Of their local guides, Schutsky said that overall the leadership was good. For the majority of the tour, Ron Allcock of Surama village acted as lead guide and Schutsky said he “is really special in his leading abilities.”

Asked if he noticed any progress in the tourism industry since his first trip to Guyana, Schutsky made comparisons to one of the world’s most popular eco-destinations. “Guyana reminds me of Costa Rica 20 years ago. I’ve led 40 tours to Costa Rica over the last 20 years and have watched them slowly smooth tourism over. Development is a long transition. You can’t do it in a year or in five years, but tourism in Guyana already has an excellent base.”

Earl reported that The Travelling Naturalist group left Guyana equally happy and just as impressed with the pristine habitat and wide array of flora and fauna. Earl said on this trip (he also led one for The Travelling Naturalist last year) he had eight clients from the UK and two from the US.



Their packed itinerary included stops at the Georgetown Botanical Gardens, Abary River, Arrowpoint Nature Resort, Kaieteur Falls, Iwokrama River Lodge, Atta Rainforest Lodge and Iwokrama Canopy Walkway, Surama village, Karanambu Lodge, and Baganara Island Resort.

Earl said popular bird species on their trip included the Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock, Long-winged Harrier, Crimson Topaz Hummingbird, Spotted Puffbird, and the many species of Macaws. Mammal highlights included a Giant Anteater with a baby, a family of Giant River Otters, Crab-eating Fox, and various bat species.



Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock

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Since first visiting in 2006, Earl said he noticed many improvements within Guyana's tourism, including better itinerary options, improved guides, and smoother logistics such as the timing of boats and transportation. Earl said new cultural presentations were also popular with the group, especially Surama's presentation featuring village children singing about the importance of preserving the forest.

Earl already penned an article on his recent trip to Guyana for his "Tim on Tour" column that appears on the website, This is Guernsey:

<http://www.thisisguernsey.com/2009/12/05/south-for-the-winter/>.

In the article Earl writes, "There was no doubt that seeing a giant anteater was my guests' most wanted wish on a recent trip to Guyana. What they saw on the savannah close to the Brazilian border was altogether unexpected and wonderful: a female carrying its baby on its back – a rare and exciting sight."

Earl wrote about many other highlights including taking a boat down the Essequibo River to Parrot Island to watch hundreds of Amazon parrots fly in to roost for the night; a visit to the Georgetown Botanical Gardens that included hand-feeding grass to West Indian Manatees and seeing three of the world's rarest birds – Blood-coloured Woodpecker, White-bellied Piculet and Festive Parrot; watching four Giant River Otters play in the Burro Burro River; and seeing seven Scarlet Macaws fly over the Iwokrama Canopy Walkway.

Bird Treks and The Travelling Naturalist are both offering Guyana tours for November 2010. To see their itineraries, visit www.birdtreks.com and www.naturalist.co.uk. To learn more about tourism in Guyana, visit www.guyanabirding.com and www.guyana-tourism.com.

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