

We, Léonie Venroij and Rick Jacobsen, joined Ralf Boobo (<https://ebird.org/profile/MTE5MTQzOQ/SR>) and Ashraf Tilburg for a 'standard 15-days birding trip' as offered on <https://www.planktonik.com/birdingsuriname/>. This journey is probably the best you can get in Suriname. It is full of birding opportunities in many different habitats. The itinerary is very well thought out, demonstrating years of experience. An amazing trip!

Our report shows 415 bird species, which were all seen, except for a few, such as some Tinamous', Marbled Wood-Quail, Grey-breasted Crake, White-crested Spadebill and Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant. Among the total, for us, over 50% were world lifers (219 sp.).

Due to overlapping observations during a previous trip in 2021 – 2022 in Costa Rica and Panama, we encountered similar bird families. We surely would have had many more world lifers in Suriname if South America was a first time visit.

Even if you're not so much into finding world lifers (as we do), this trip was a wonderful experience to watch all sorts of colourful and hard to find birds. Just watching a male Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, glittering many amazing colours in the sunlight; this is such an amazing sight. The lush forest in some habitats might be thick and hard to watch birds, but Ralf and Ashraf have very well trained ears and show the patience to draw the birds out in the open. What startled us was the high number of Antshrikes, Antwrens, Antbirds, Antthrushes and Antpitta's we got to see through the binoculars. The rare BAND-TAILED ANTSHRIKE (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S169482068>) and the VARIEGATED ANTPITTA (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S170015458>) showed itself.

## Accommodations

There are four main habitats. Each location comes with fitting accommodation. Obviously, Paramaribo will offer many choices for accommodation. And those are on par with international standards: fancy with airco and luxury breakfasts. Then again; we saw little of the hotel as each day started early (6.15 – 6.30 am) and ended in the dark (looking for Potoo's!). We found the Torarica resort rather exclusive, but maybe some guests will appreciate the luxury after 10-11 days birding in the bush. The rural locations offer less choice, such as Fredberg or Brownsberg. Cola Creek had airco rooms. Fredberg and Brownsberg don't have airco. Then again, Brownsberg is at a higher altitude, which offers slightly cooler nights. Fredberg has a great team to prepare wonderful meals and clean the rooms. In all the rural places the accommodation fitted us well. Still it can be described best as basic. Other guests in their trip reports consider Cole Creek, Fredberg and Brownsberg as basic as well. As said; this was not an issue for us. The beds were good and the food was well prepared. We never got ill during the trip. We did bring our own mosquito net and used it in every location (well, except in Paramaribo).

## The bird guides

Both Ralf Boboo and Ashraf Tilburg have years of professional birding experience. They are exceptionally well in identifying songs and calls. They know potential hotspots within each forest, but stay flexible. They don't use outdated GPS locations from previous trip reports, because birds move around: fruiting trees in different seasons keep locations dynamic. Instead, Ralf and Ashraf go by the ear. Once heard, call back recordings are used at times. We were not very supportive of using call back, but the birds in Suriname are not overly pestered by call backs, unlike other hotspots in the world, and the forest was often very thick. Ralf and Ashraf used call back as limited as possible.

In addition, both Ralf and Ashraf are very good at finding nightjars, nighthawks, owls and potoo's.

## The birds

According to Spaans, Ottema and Ribot in the book 'Birds of Suriname' (2nd edition, 2018, p. 42) there are some 50 species considered Guianan endemics. We saw 38 endemic species during this two-weeks trip. We've added a few links to the eBird list for each endemic. Others are found using the 'find' function in the trip report.

The highlights among those endemics were Marail Guan (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S170322440>), Yellow-billed Jacamar (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S169818229>), Guianan Toucanet (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S169482068>), Black-throated Antshrike, Guianan Warbling-Antbird, McConnell's Spinetail, Painted Tody-Flycatcher, Guianan Cock-of-the-rock and Capuchinbird.

Other highlights were Great Potoo (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S171058167>), White-winged Potoo (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S169596031>), Racket-tipped Thorntail and Tufted Coquette (common at the Fredberg's basecamp: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S169362580>), Mangrove Rail, Zigzag Heron, Least Bittern, Rufous Crab Hawk, Foothill Screech-Owl, Burrowing Owls (many at the Zanderij airport), Collared Puffbird (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S169952606>), both Piculets (Golden-spangled and Arrowhead), Yellow-throated Woodpecker, Ferruginous-backed Antbird (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S169482068>), Variegated Antpitta, Point-tailed Palmcreeper, Tiny Tyrant-Manakin, Crimson-hooded Manakin (at the start of the trail at Chocopot), Crimson Fruitcrow, Sharpbill, Finsch's Euphonia, and Short-billed Honeycreeper (with first time images for Suriname of this bird).

The Merlin app has a calendar, showing by month which bird can be seen. The month of April wasn't very encouraging. It seemed that most species were reported May onwards, during the rainy season. But

the high number of birds seen during our trip proves otherwise. It is likely that birding in April in Suriname is somewhat underreported, which may show in the statistical data on e-Bird.

Without the support of Ralf and Ashraf we never would had this wonderful birding memory of Suriname. They come highly recommended. We even added a few more days with both of them after the standard trip. All four of us checked out the Maratakka river and added many more lifers to our Suriname list.