

AMAZONIAN BRAZIL

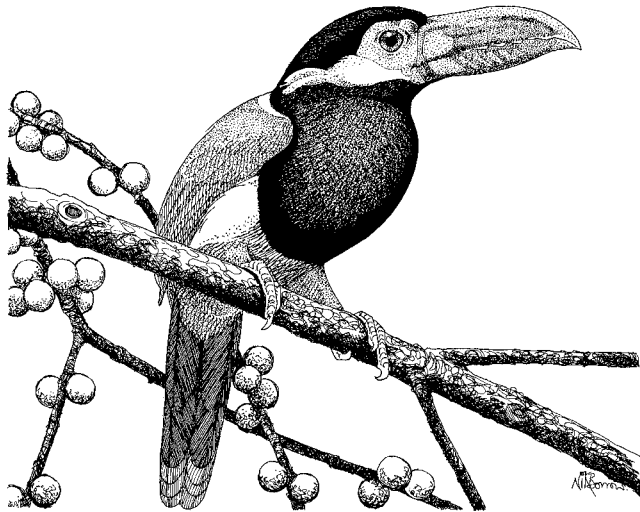
Manaus, São Gabriel da Cachoeira & Roraima

Saturday 25th August – Sunday 9th September 2013 (16 days)
Roraima Post-Tour Extension to Friday 14th September (5 days)

Leader: Eustace Barnes

Group Size Limit: 8

Tour Category: Easy to Moderate



Tawny-tufted Toucanet (Nik Borrow)

Deep in the heart of the immense Brazilian rainforest, whirlpools rotate as vast quantities of warm black water collide with an immense volume of cooler, silt-laden white water. For this is the point where South America's two largest rivers, the Rio Negro and the mighty Amazon, meet at the historic city of Manaus. At the 'wedding of the waters' where these two majestic rivers collide the waters flow violently side by side, not completely mixing for several miles, forming a world-renowned spectacle.

The vast Amazonian rainforest carpets the whole region surrounding Manaus, a bright, bustling and modern South American city that is still, uniquely, surrounded by this wondrous greenery. Manaus was the capital of the rubber boom in the early 20th century, an economic windfall which financed its famous opera house (recently restored

to its full glory) and its floating harbour (built in 1902) that receives ocean-going vessels an amazing 1400 miles (2250km) inland from the Atlantic Ocean!

Manaus is located at the heart of the most bird-rich forest ecosystem in the world and is positioned at the junction of two great South American rivers which over many thousands of years have formed natural barriers to many bird species, with the consequence that sibling species are frequently found on opposite banks. This fortunate position makes Manaus the perfect base to explore this avian hot-spot and our tour is designed to visit each of the varied habitats within the surrounding region, which holds a truly amazing total of almost 700 bird species!

This is a tour for those who want to seek out a rich assemblage of Amazonian birds, including many

specialities, in a remote region while still enjoying remarkably comfortable travelling conditions. We will find ourselves birding the lush humid lowland rainforest, rapidly changing Amazonian river islands, stunted 'campina' sandy forest and seasonally flooded 'igapó' and 'varzea' forests where annually the waters can rise and fall a staggering 50 feet (15m) or more!

A lovely forest-based hotel situated about 70 miles (110km) north of Manaus is our first base for exploring the surrounding tracts of Amazonian lowland rainforest. Here, as we scan from the top of the famous 138ft-tall (42m-tall) INPA meteorological tower, emergent tree crowns break through the green carpet of pristine tropical rainforest which fills our vision in every direction. The tower is a superb vantage point to look for such spectacular canopy dwellers as Red-and-green Macaw, Caica and Dusky Parrots, yelping Red-billed and croaking Channel-billed Toucans, Pompadour Cotinga, Crimson Fruitcrow and roving mixed flocks full of brightly-coloured tanagers and honeycreepers. A nearby INPA reserve is covered in the characteristic 'campina' forest of white sandy soils and holds the recently rediscovered Pelzel's Tody-Tyrant, as

well as Bronzy Jacamar, Guianan Slaty Antshrike and the localized Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakin. From our well-positioned hotel we will explore the many nearby dirt roads leading into tall terra firme forest where we will be looking for Pavonine Cuckoo, Crimson Topaz, Spotted Antpitta, Purple-breasted Cotinga and Blue-backed Tanager. A nearby stony campina area holds a small resident population of the poorly known White-naped Seedeater, as well as such localized species such as Green-tailed Goldenthrout, Black Manakin and Red-shouldered Tanager.

Next we continue our Amazonian odyssey by exploring the varied and bird-rich riverine habitats where the waters of the Amazon and the Rio Negro meet. Here we will be looking for a series of specialities including Short-tailed Parrot, Olive-spotted Hummingbird, the recently rediscovered Scaled Spinetail, Parker's Spinetail, the enigmatic Black-and-white Antbird and Pearly-breasted Conebill.

After all this excitement, a small plane then takes us 500 miles (800km) northwest of Manaus, allowing us to gaze down onto a never ending green carpet of rainforest, intersected only by the thin black line of the Rio Negro.





Crimson Fruitcrow (Nik Borrow)

As we gradually start our descent the spectacular Bela Adormecida, a small isolated and as yet unexplored mountain range, emerges from the endless greenery of the forest below, reminding us of Conan Doyle's famous 'lost world'. Our destination is the small town of São Gabriel da Cachoeira on the upper Rio Negro, here marked by a line of white rapids. This unique area boasts some of the most spectacular scenic views anywhere in the world, but its prime attraction for birders is the presence of the so-called 'Imeri endemics', centred around extreme eastern Colombia, remote southern Venezuela and the northwestern corner of Brazil. We will explore the area by small canoes, as well as along a network of forest trails and deserted roads, looking for some of the least known birds

of the continent. Specialities include the stunning Tawny-tufted Toucanet, the recently rediscovered Grey-bellied Antbird and the localized Yellow-throated Antwren. Other possibilities include Pavonine Quetzal, Brown-banded Puffbird, Chestnut-crested, White-plumed and Amazonas Antbirds, Pearly Antshrike, Black-necked Red-Cotinga, Citron-bellied Attila, Yellow-crowned and Wire-tailed Manakins, Guianan Gnatcatcher and Brown-headed Greenlet.

Finally, heading across and out of the mighty Amazon, we will enter one of the most majestic rivers in the world as we ascend the Rio Negro towards the Anavilhanas, the world's largest riverine archipelago, where we will stay in a remote jungle lodge. The calm waters effectively act as a gigantic mirror, forming huge and truly breathtaking reflections of the forested islands and cloud formations. An interesting set of specialists are found on the black water river islands, including Zimmer's Woodcreeper, the recently rediscovered Klages's Antwren and the poorly-known Cherrie's Antwren. As we travel by boat through this unique wilderness and alongside the flooded igapó forest, the loud vibrating songs of Ash-breasted Antbirds and the deep bouncing calls of Blackish-grey Antshrikes fill the air. By the time we finish our exploration of the Brazilian Amazon we will have experienced a host of special birds in a remarkable part of the world.

The Brazilian state of Roraima represents one of the most diverse and heterogeneous areas of Amazonia, yet it seldom receives visits from birders. During the optional extension there will be an opportunity to explore this special part of Brazil. Upland terra firme forests, flooded forests, white sand forests, savannas, montane forests and tepuis (table-like mountains), all

meet in an area roughly the size of the United Kingdom, boasting an impressive 800 bird species. However, after two weeks in the Manaus and São Gabriel da Cachoeira regions, and having worked hard for the terra firme, flooded and white-sand forest specialties, we will devote our attention to the savannas and gallery forests of Roraima. These savannas, which continue unbroken towards Rupununi in Guyana, represent the largest and more diverse savannas in Amazonia and will be an impressive change to what we have experienced during the main tour.

Accordingly, the birds will be very different, with very little overlap. The main goal is to find the two rare and endangered Roraiman endemics: Rio Branco Antbird and Hoary-throated Spinetail, two species restricted to gallery forests along the upper Rio Branco and few of its tributaries, and thus not seen on any other bird tour. Once we have seen these two gems, we will work our way north from Boa Vista (the state's capital) towards the border with Venezuela, searching for additional savanna and gallery forest specialties, which include the restricted-range Sun Parakeet, White-bellied Piculet and Finsch's Euphonia, and also Southern White-fringed Antwren, as well as many other species which will not have been seen during the main tour. Indeed, the extension is not only for those interested in seeing some of the least known endemics and specialties of South America, but also for those interested in understanding the extraordinary habitat and species diversity of Amazonia.

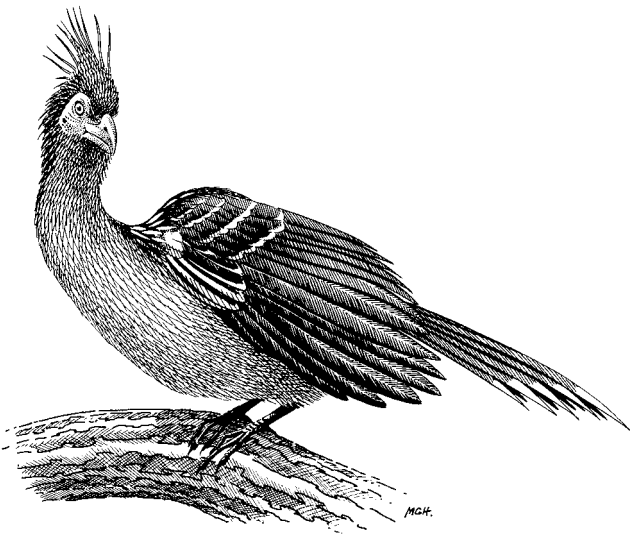
Birdquest has operated tours to Amazonian Brazil since 2001.

Itinerary

Day 1 The tour begins in the early afternoon at Manaus, from where we will drive north to the small town of

Presidente Figueiredo for a four nights stay in a forest-based hotel. Along the way we shall make a stop to look for the first highlight of the trip, the Point-tailed Palmcreeper, plus an array of other Mauritia palm specialists, such as Red-bellied Macaw, Fork-tailed Palm Swift, Sulphury Flycatcher and Moriche Oriole.

Days 2-4 From our strategically located hotel surrounded by fine Amazonian terra firme forests and some of the best 'campina' (white sandy soil) forests in the region, we shall walk a variety of roads that will introduce us to the very special and rich avifauna of central Amazonia. As dawn breaks the forest becomes alive with an impressive concert of avian sounds. An early start might reward us with the piercing whistles of a shy Pavonine Cuckoo, along with the calls of up to four species of forest-falcons, including Barred, Collared, Lined, and Slaty-backed. However, we shall be very lucky to see all of these secretive birds, as they live well hidden in the immense greenery. Walking along the main access road to the hotel, we shall surely encounter a great variety of forest birds, including many specialties of the Guianan Shield. Among the species we might encounter are the imposing Spix's Guan, the smaller Marail Guan, Black-tailed, Amazonian White-tailed and Amazonian Violaceous Trogons, Blue-crowned Motmot, Paradise Jacamar, White-necked and Pied Puffbirds, Black Nunbird, Black-spotted Barbet, Green and Black-necked Aracaris, Channel-billed and Red-billed Toucans, Yellow-tufted, Golden-collared, Yellow-throated and Waved Woodpeckers, Spot-throated, Olivaceous and Wedge-billed Woodcreepers, Rufous-tailed Xenops, Fasciated, Black-throated and Mouse-coloured Antshrikes, Warbling, Black-headed and Black-throated



Hoatzin (Michael Hodgson)

Antbirds, Brown-bellied Antwren, White-throated, Golden-headed, White-crowned and White-fronted Manakins, Grey-crowned and McConnell's Flycatchers, White-eyed Tody-Tyrant, White-eyed and Spotted Tody-Flycatchers, Double-banded Pygmy-Tyrant, Bright-rumped Attila, Greyish Mourner, Eastern Sirystes and Green Oropendola. If we are very lucky we will even see a small flock of the rare Dusky Purpletuft. The hotel grounds are also very rich in hummingbirds and we may well see species such as White-necked Jacobin, Grey-breasted Sabrewing, Versicoloured Emerald, Rufous-throated Sapphire, Black-eared Fairy and even the overwhelmingly beautiful Crimson Topaz. Once we explore the forest understorey, by means of a network of trails, we will start discovering the magic of the permanent mixed-species flocks of insectivorous birds that frequent this habitat and get to know the eleven core species, including the two flock leaders: Cinereous and Dusky-throated Antshrikes. Both of these species perch upright in the understorey, at times

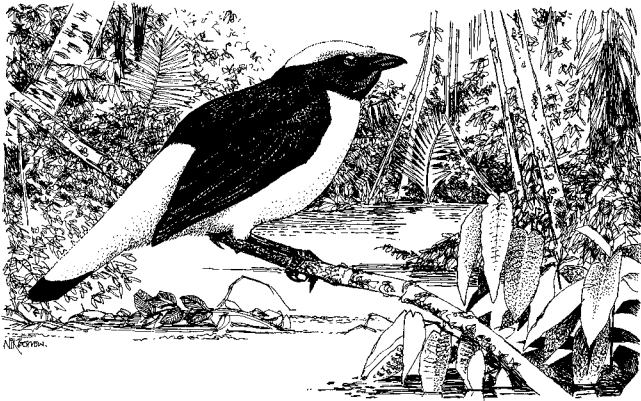
giving fake alarm calls, ready to sally out and gobble up any insects dropped by resulting panicking flock members. The rest of the core flock members include Chestnut-rumped Woodcreeper, two species of foliage-gleaners (Olive-backed and Rufous-rumped), four species of antwrens (Rufous-bellied, White-flanked, Grey and Long-winged), Tawny-crowned Greenlet and the handsome Fulvous Shrike-Tanager. Away from the flocks we might encounter other interesting species, such as Ferruginous-backed Antbird, Black-faced and Rufous-capped Antthrushes, and Tiny Tyrant-Manakin. If we are in luck a flurry of nervous hummingbirds will alert us to the presence of a tiny Amazonian Pygmy-Owl and if we are truly fortunate we will even come across the beautiful Guianan Red-Cotinga. Mammals found in these forests include Golden-handed Tamarin and Red Howler Monkey.

Grassland and bushes in cleared areas hold Common Ground-Dove, White-tipped Dove, Smooth-billed Ani, Band-rumped Swift, Glittering-throated Emerald,

Swallow-winged Puffbird, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Piratic Flycatcher, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Silver-beaked, Palm and Blue-grey Tanagers, Blue-black Grassquit, Lesser Seed-Finch and Shiny Cowbird.

On one morning we will have a very early start as we head for the famous INPA tower nestled in its pristine forest reserve. We will arrive in time to be on top of the tower to hear the forest waking up around us. As we slowly climb up this splendid 42-metre tower, a whole new world will emerge. Experiencing a rich dawn chorus from high in the canopy is a rare privilege, and as the sky lightens mighty roars will send tingles down our spines as Red Howler Monkeys start calling away from nearby treetops. Among the interesting birds that might pose for fine views are a number of toucans, including Guianan Toucanet, and a great variety of parrots, which will surely put on a special show. We have good chances of seeing Red-and-green Macaw, as well as Golden-winged Parakeet, Caica, Blue-headed, Dusky and Red-fan Parrots, and Mealy Amazon. As the sun rises and starts to catch the highest emergent trees, we will look for the superb Spangled and Pompadour Cotingas as they show off their brilliant plumage while perched atop dead branches. We shall also scan the endless greenery in the hope of finding the poorly-known and seldom-seen Crimson Fruitcrow. Canopy mixed-species flocks present a highlight in themselves and regularly make their rounds by the tower. Most of their nuclear attendants, which include Lineated Woodcreeper, Spot-backed, Pygmy and Ashy-winged Antwrens, Wing-barred Piprites, Forest and Grey Elaenias, Zimmer's (split from Yellow-margined) and Yellow-throated Flycatchers, Olive-green, Slender-footed and White-lored Tyrannulets,

Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo, Buff-cheeked Greenlet and Guianan Gnatcatcher, may well be seen up close from the tower. Solitary specialities that we will look for in the forest canopy include Black-bellied Cuckoo, Glossy-backed Becard and the very pretty Painted Tody-Flycatcher, and we may also spot some Plumbeous Pigeons. The presence of some fruiting trees next to the tower should allow us to make detailed observations of a number of colourful tanagers, such as Yellow-backed, Paradise, Spotted, Opal-rumped, Flame-crested, Fulvous-crested and perhaps the uncommon Red-billed Pied and Dotted Tanagers. Green, Short-billed, Purple, and Red-legged Honeycreepers, together with Black-faced and Blue Dacnises, and White-vented and Golden sided Euphonias, may also show up. In sunny weather a variety of raptors can be expected to start riding the thermals as temperatures rise. We shall scan the skies for soaring Greater Yellow-headed and King Vultures, Double-toothed Kite, White Hawk and Ornate Hawk-Eagle (and even Crested Eagle if we are really in luck), whilst both Chapman's and Short-tailed Swifts may sail close by catching insects. Once the bird activity in the forest canopy has decreased, we shall descend into the dark realm of the forest understorey for a walk along a wide trail where we shall look for several species of woodcreepers and antbirds, a possible understorey flock and, if we are lucky enough, that much needed ant-swarm, professionally followed by White-plumed and Rufous-throated Antbirds among others. Additionally, far away in the understorey we may hear the calls of both Spotted and Variegated Antpittas (although these secretive birds are very hard to see). The characteristic calls of Screaming Pihás constantly fill the air, and at some point during the course of the tour



Black-necked Red-Cotinga (Nik Borrow)

we should be able to admire the drably-cloaked male of this ubiquitous Amazonian species emitting its strident calls from a perch in its lek, but the unrivalled 'songmaster' amongst the forest birds must surely be the awkward-looking Musician Wren. Local legends say that all the other birds of the forest stop to listen in appreciation of its song's great quality!

Our last goal north of Manaus, after exploring the canopy and the understorey of the rich terra firme forest, will be to discover the poorly-known array of campina (or white-sand forest) specialists. After spending the morning at the INPA tower we will drive to the nearby INPA campina forest reserve. Here the vegetation consists of short stunted trees festooned with bromeliads and orchids. Our main target is the little-known Pelzeln's Tody Tyrant, recently rediscovered after being lost since the middle of the 19th century! We will also search for the Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakin with its bizarre churring calls and in addition we may well find Spotted Puffbird, Guianan Slaty Antshrike and Thrush-like Schiffornis. We shall also check out any flowering trees in the hope of finding the diminutive and seldom-seen Racket-tailed

Coquette. On the following day we will head for another campina where we will look for the rest of the specialities. Among them are Green-tailed Goldenthrout, Bronzy Jacamar, White-fringed Antwren, Rufous-crowned Elaenia, the yet-to-be-split 'Campina Flycatcher', Black Manakin, Red-shouldered Tanager and the beautiful and rare White-naped Seedeater. Two other specialties might be seen, but we will consider ourselves lucky if we find Pale-bellied Mourner and Plumbeous Euphonia. Other birds in this unique habitat include Scaled Pigeon, Orange-winged Amazon, Eastern Long-billed Hermit, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Black-billed Thrush, Blue-backed Tanager and White-lored Euphonia. Venturing along a nearby forest trail we may well find Sapphire-rumped Parrotlet, Black-throated Trogon, Yellow-billed Jacamar, Ringed and Red-necked Woodpeckers, Short-billed Leaf-tosser, Willis's, Grey and Scale-backed Antbirds, Coraya Wren, Long-billed Gnatwren, Red-eyed Vireo, and Yellow-green, and Blue-black Grosbeaks. If we are extremely fortunate, we will even encounter the superb Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock eating fruits in the vicinity of some caves.

Day 5 After a last morning in the Presidente Figueiredo area we will drive back to Manaus for a three nights stay.

Days 6-7 Early on our first full day we will set off from Manaus by boat. After crossing the Amazon at 'the wedding of the waters', the Solimões-Negro interfluvium where these two mighty rivers come together to form the Amazon proper, we shall reach our destination, Machantaria island. This river island is several miles long and we will explore each habitat type, ranging from early successional scrub at the lower end through taller *Cecropia* woodland to mature forest at the upper end. Overhead, Tui Parakeets and Short-tailed Parrots reveal their identity with their raucous calls, and in dense vine tangles we will look for the recently rediscovered Scaled Spinetail. An interesting set of spinetails is scattered through the various habitats and, as well as Scaled, there are Dark-breasted, White-bellied, Parker's (recently split from Rusty-backed), Yellow-chinned and Red-and-white. The loud and explosive duets of the Lesser Hornero fill the air around seasonal agricultural fields as we search for the striking Black-and-white Antbird, the rather awkward-looking island race of the Fuscous Flycatcher, the dainty River Tyrannulet, Brownish Elaenia, Pearly-breasted Conebill, and Orange-headed and Hooded Tanagers in the *Cecropia* dominated patches. Nearby willow stands hold Olive-spotted Hummingbird, Spotted Tody-Flycatcher, Riverside Tyrant, austral migrants such as Dark-billed Cuckoo, as well as gaudy Oriole Blackbirds with their harsh calls. In the taller sections of forest on the island we shall look for Castelnau's Antshrike, Leaden Antwren, and Cinnamon and White-eyed Attilas. Other species we may encounter are Capped, Cocoli and Striated Herons, Great and

Snowy Egrets, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Black, Turkey and Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures, Savanna, Black-collared and Roadside Hawks, grey-breasted Crane, Azure and Purple Gallinules, Wattled Jacana, Yellow-billed Tern, Black Skimmer, Grey-fronted Dove, White-eyed Parakeet, Black-throated Mango, Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, Little and Spot-breasted Woodpeckers, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Lesser Kiskadee, Bicoloured Conebill, Lined and Chestnut-bellied Seedeaters, the stunning Orange-backed Troupial, and gaudy Yellow-hooded and Red-breasted Blackbirds. We shall also scan the sandbars in the river for an assortment of shorebirds, not only including the resident Collared and Pied Plovers, but also such boreal migrants as American Golden Plover, Hudsonian Godwit and Solitary, Spotted and White-rumped Sandpipers.

On our second full day, an early start will take us back to the fantastic INPA tower for a second visit, giving us another chance to look for anything we missed earlier and ensuring that we see most of the canopy specialities. We will set off in time to look for nightbirds. Pauraque is easy to see and with luck we will also see Crested Owl or Spectacled Owl. We can always dream of stumbling on the very rare Rufous Potoo or equally rare and poorly-known White-winged Potoo!

Day 8 A short flight this morning will take us to São Gabriel da Cachoeira, a secluded town in the spectacular upper Rio Negro region, where we will stay for five nights. As we fly northwest we travel over an immense green carpet of forest, only broken occasionally by the black line of the Rio Negro. São Gabriel is one of those rare places in Amazonia where it looks as if time has stood still. With its quaint church overlooking



Wire-tailed Manakins (Michael Hodgson)

the river's rapids and its slow pace of life, it can be hard to remember that one is not in a time capsule. Behind the spectacular rapids the isolated Bela Adormecida mountain looms out of the lowland rainforest. In the afternoon we will commence our exploration of the surrounding area.

Days 9-12 As we explore this superb birding area we will focus on finding the poorly known 'Imeri endemics' and a number of other specialities, but at the same time we will have great opportunities to come across a broad cross-section of more widespread species. Prime targets include the tiny Yellow-throated Antwren, the once near-mythical Brown-banded Puffbird, the elusive Cinnamon Neopipo, Citron-bellied Attila, Brown-headed Greenlet and the striking Tawny-tufted Toucanet. The highly localized Grey-bellied Antbird also occurs in the area, but we will count ourselves very lucky if we find this shy bird of the understory. While walking along the trails we may spot the iridescent green and red hues of a superlative Pavonine Quetzal hover-gleaning for protein-packed fruit, or come upon a garrulous group of brightly coloured Ivory-billed or Many-banded Aracaris. Antbirds make up a large part of the understory's

avian communities and we shall hope to come across Fasciated, Amazonian and Pearly Antshrikes, and Dusky, Yellow-browed, Amazonas (split from Black-headed) and Spot-backed Antbirds. Several antbird species are obligate followers of the nomadic army ants and we shall constantly be listening for the telltale churring calls of these 'ant swarm professionals'. The magical spectacle of watching the destructive columns of an army ant swarm and its avian attendants is an out-of-this-world experience, but we shall be very lucky indeed if we can enjoy such a privilege. Typical ant followers in this region include the almost mythical Chestnut-crested Antbird, the more widespread Bicoloured Antbird and the striking White-plumed Antbird, but the most stunning of all is the large Reddish-winged Bare-Eye. Several woodcreepers are also regular around these raiding columns, notably Plain-brown and Amazonian Barred Woodcreepers, as well as the rarely seen White-chinned Woodcreeper. The clear whistles of the Variegated Tinamou often reverberate through the forest, though seeing this chicken-like forest floor dweller is a much harder challenge. At any time we may hear the characteristic calls of a Cinereous Antshrike or a Fulvous-Shrike Tanager, betraying the presence of

a mixed-species flock. The former perch upright in the understory, at times giving fake alarm calls, ready to sally out and gobble up any insects dropped by resulting panicking flock members. The latter often include Buff-throated Foliage-gleaners as well as a broad guild of antwrens, perhaps including Stipple-throated and Rufous-tailed. In mid-storey, White-fronted Nunbirds announce their presence with their cacophonous choruses, while movements in the outer branches may reveal actively gleaning Dusky-capped Greenlets. Garrulous groups of Red-rumped Caciques move through the canopy, whilst in the understory a flash of yellow reveals a Whiskered Flycatcher, continuously fanning its tail while chasing smaller prey items around the periphery of the flock. By exploring many trails we may be lucky enough to stumble upon a fruiting shrub or tree which could attract such gems as Blue-crowned and Blue-backed Manakins. Along the streams we may find Spot-winged Antbird, whilst in the understory we may encounter Banded Antbird and the beautiful Collared Gnatwren. Flycatchers abound here, and we may well find Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant, Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet, Golden-crowned and White-crested Spadebills, and Ruddy-tailed and Dusky-chested Flycatchers. Other birds we may see in these vast forests include Tiny Hawk, the raucous Red-throated Caracara, Marbled Wood-Quail, Maroon-tailed and Cobalt-winged Parakeets, Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet, Black-headed and Orange-cheeked Parrots, Reddish, Straight-billed and Great-billed Hermits, Fiery Topaz, Blackish Nightjar, Great Jacamar, Gilded Barbet (split from Black-spotted), Golden-green, Red-stained, Chestnut and Scale-breasted Woodpeckers, Buff-throated Woodcreeper, Plain Xenops, Spot-winged Antshrike, the

gaudy Wire-tailed Manakin, Dwarf Tyrant-Manakin, Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-capped and Pink-throated Becards, Yellow-bellied Tanager and Rufous-bellied Euphonia. If we are in luck we will come across a Collared Puffbird. Twittering swarms of Black-collared Swallows breed in rocks along the river and huge numbers of Olive Oropendolas form a great spectacle as they fly across the river to roost. The highly-prized Black-necked Red-Cotinga inhabits these forests, but seeing this furtive jewel is much harder than hearing its startling calls.

Day 13 A morning flight will take us back to Manaus, from where we will travel by boat up the magical Rio Negro in order to spend two nights in a remote lodge in the Anavilhanas archipelago, surrounded by pristine wilderness. As we travel along the river and among the narrow, uninhabited islands, we shall scan the banks and the skies for such raptors as Grey-headed, American Swallow-tailed and Plumbeous Kites, Slate-coloured Hawk, and Black-and-white and Black Hawk-Eagles. We shall also keep an eye out for the two freshwater river dolphins, the larger Pink River Dolphin and the smaller Grey Dolphin.

Day 14 The Anavilhanas Reserve comprises hundreds of narrow and elongated islands, many of which have a secluded lake. Here our lodge's small motorized canoes are perfect for birding from the river channels and for disembarking to bird along some of the forest trails, water levels permitting. The viney edges of the tall forest are home to the recently rediscovered Klages's Antwren, and we shall diligently listen for this poorly-known species' characteristic two-note call. We shall also seek out its close relative, Cherrie's Antwren, a restricted-range species found here



Spectacled Owl (Nik Borrow)

around sandy lake borders. Another major speciality here is the mythical Zimmer's Woodcreeper, a species which eluded ornithologists for over a century due to its similarity to Straight-billed Woodcreeper. Boisterous flocks of Festive Amazons are much in evidence here, their throaty calls sounding like they are forever partying, whilst odd-looking Bare-necked Fruitcrows flap across the river with unusual but distinctive wing beats. While walking the forest trails, or where necessary paddling through the flooded forest, we shall sort through nervous mixed flocks which may contain Black-fronted Nunbird, Straight-billed and Striped Woodcreepers, Rusty-backed and Speckled Spinetails, Black-crested and Blackish-grey Antshrikes, Yellow-olive and Short-crested Flycatchers, Buff-breasted Wren and Grey-chested Greenlet. We may be lucky and observe the dramatic Long-billed Woodcreeper as it hops along a bough, probing deep into a bromeliad with its extremely elongated beak, searching the trapped leaf litter for invertebrates. We may well hear the deep booming calls of the rarely seen Lesser Razor-billed Curassow, but we shall be fortunate indeed if we come across this imposing cracid. Other understory birds we

will search for include Dusky-throated Hermit, Green-tailed Jacamar, Ash-breasted and Black-chinned Antbirds, Sneathlidge's Tody-Tyrant, Yellow-crowned Elaenia and Amazonian Black Tyrant. White-winged Swallows swoop over secluded blackwater lakes, and hidden inlets hold pairs of Muscovy Ducks, the male exposing its white wing speculum as they flush on our approach. Luxuriant waterside shrubbery holds large flocks of Greater Anis, while actively feeding Amazonian Pale-tipped Tyrannulets chase insects, their loud duets echoing over the water. Other possibilities include Varzea Schiffornis, Tropical Gnatcatcher, Purple-throated Euphonia and smart Turquoise and Guira Tanagers. Harsh squawks overhead signal groups of majestic Blue-and-yellow Macaws flying by, adding even more splashes of colour to the scene. Other birds we may see include the strange, prehistoric-looking Hoatzin, Pale-vented and Ruddy Pigeons, Grey-rumped Swift, Pied Puffbird, Cream-coloured, Lineated and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers, Amazonian Umbrellabird, Brown-chested and Grey-breasted Martins, and Orange-fronted Yellow-Finch. As dusk falls the eerie calls of Green Ibis reverberate across the river, flocks of Band-tailed Nighthawks

emerge to flit erratically in pursuit of the rich swarms of insects over the water, Ladder-tailed Nightjars sally out from low bushes and bat-like Short-tailed Nighthawks hunt over the forested river islands. At night we shall keep a lookout for the bright eye reflections of a perched Great or Common Potoo, all amidst a wonderful symphony of frog calls. Several nocturnal mammals are possible too, and we may encounter the very vocal but hard to see Spiny Bamboo Rat or a quietly foraging Kinkajou.

Day 15 After spending the morning in the beautiful Anavilhanas we will return to Manaus for an overnight stay.

Day 16 Early in the morning we will bird along the Careiro road on the south bank of the Solimões opposite Manaus. Our prime target here is the slick-looking Glossy Antshrike, while other species we may well find include Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Snail Kite, Great Black-Hawk, Laughing and Bat Falcons, Blue-winged Parrotlet, White-winged Parakeet, Squirrel, Little and Striped Cuckoos, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Bar-breasted Piculet, Barred Antshrike, Silvered Antbird, Rusty-fronted and Yellow-browed Tody-Flycatchers, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Fork-tailed, Variegated and Social Flycatchers, White-throated and Tropical Kingbirds, Great Kiskadee, Cinereous Becard, Black-tailed and Masked Tityras, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Black-capped Donacobius, Thrush-like Wren, Masked Yellowthroat, Wing-barred Seedeater, Greyish Saltator, Russet-backed Oropendola, and Yellow-rumped and Solitary Caciques. The tour ends at Manaus in the late morning.

Roraima Post-Tour Extension Itinerary

Day 16 Today we will catch a midday flight from Manaus to Boa Vista for a four nights

stay. Later this afternoon we will have time for some initial exploration

Days 17-19 The habitat we will want to concentrate on first will be the riverine or gallery forests of the Upper Rio Branco, which is where our two target endemics, Rio Branco Antbird and Hoary-throated Spinetail, hide. We will need to drive about 100 km from Boa Vista, but with persistence we should see both of these rarely observed birds very well. After this we will feel free to start looking for some other interesting species, such as Pied Plover, Toco Toucan, the restricted-range White-bellied Piculet, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Pale-legged Hornero, Amazonia Inezia (split from Pale-tipped), Ochre-ored Flatbill, Greenish Elaenia, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Yellow Tyrannulet, Fuscous Flycatcher (possibly a different species from the form that we will have seen near Manaus), and White-winged Becard. The savannas along the Rio Branco hold Buff-necked Ibis, Crested Bobwhite, Bicolored Wren, Bare-eyed Thrush and Burnished-buff Tanager, as well as many widespread species including Pearl and White-tailed Kites, Northern Crested-Caracara, American Kestrel, Aplomado and Laughing Falcons, Southern Lapwing, Orange-winged and Yellow-crowned Parrots, Burrowing Owl, Eared Dove, Brown-throated Parakeet, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Ferruginous Pigmy-Owl, Grassland Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark. At dusk we will scan the skies for Least and Lesser Nighthawks and later, as it gets darker, we will listen for the calls of Tropical Screech-Owl, Pauraque, and White-tailed and Rufous Nightjars, all of which we have a good chance of seeing.

During our stay at Boa Vista

we shall also drive north towards the Venezuelan border. Here we will feel that we are really far away from everything, as we will be surrounded by Indian lands, which make up 55% of Roraiman territory. We will need to drive a considerable distance in order to find some seldom-seen species. We will be hoping to find Southern White-fringed Antwren, the restricted-range Finsch's

Euphonia and, with luck, a flock of the very localized Sun Parakeet, but while looking for these exciting species we should find Sharp-tailed Ibis, Double-striped Thick-knee, Red-shouldered Macaw, Yellow-bellied, Lesser, and Plain-crested Elaenias, Bearded Tachuri, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Pale-eyed Pigmy-Tyrant, Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch and Yellow Oriole, among many others.

Day 20 After a final morning in Roraima we will take an afternoon flight to Manaus for an overnight stay.

Day 21 The extension ends at Manaus this morning.

Accommodation & Road

Transport: The hotels/lodges are of normal Birdquest standard throughout (although the one in São Gabriel is at the simple end of the range).

Road transport is by minibus and roads are good.

Walking: The walking effort is mostly easy, but there are some moderate grade walks.

Climate: It is generally hot and humid. Periods of sunshine alternate with overcast spells and there is regular rainfall.

Bird Photography: Opportunities are worthwhile.