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# A guide to wildlife friendly tourism

by the members of Visit Rupununi

Published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Cooperation Centre of Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD) and the Wildlife Conservation Society

visit  
**RUPUNUNI**  
Guyana



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Visit Rupununi (VR) is an umbrella group of Rupununi's tourism enterprises. It is a registered friendly society, recognized as the Regional Tourism Committee and was Guyana's first Regional Destination Marketing and Management Organization. VR's mission is to develop, improve and promote sustainable tourism in the Rupununi by building the capacity of local communities and tourism stakeholders; establishing standards on quality and safety, while conserving the nature-based, traditional heritage of the Rupununi; and marketing the region as a single destination with a wide variety of products.

VR is coordinated by an Executive Board, representing a balance of the region's tourism interests including community, private enterprises, non-governmental organizations and regional bodies.



The Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme is a major international initiative that aims to improve wildlife conservation and food security. SWM is an Organisation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) initiative, funded by the European Union. It is being implemented by a dynamic consortium of partners that includes the CIFOR, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Wildlife Conservation Society and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD - [www.cirad.fr/en](http://www.cirad.fr/en)).

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Alice Layton, Ashley Holland, Colin Edwards, Erin Earl, Fran Pires, Gloria Durante, Kayla de Freitas, Kenneth Butler, Leroy Ignacio, Marcelle Chan-a-Sue, Melanie McTurk, Michelle Kenyon, Raquel Thomas, Ron Allcock, Rovin Alvin, Samantha James, Victor Pires, Jonathan Joseph, Deuel Hughes of GWCMC and the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme.



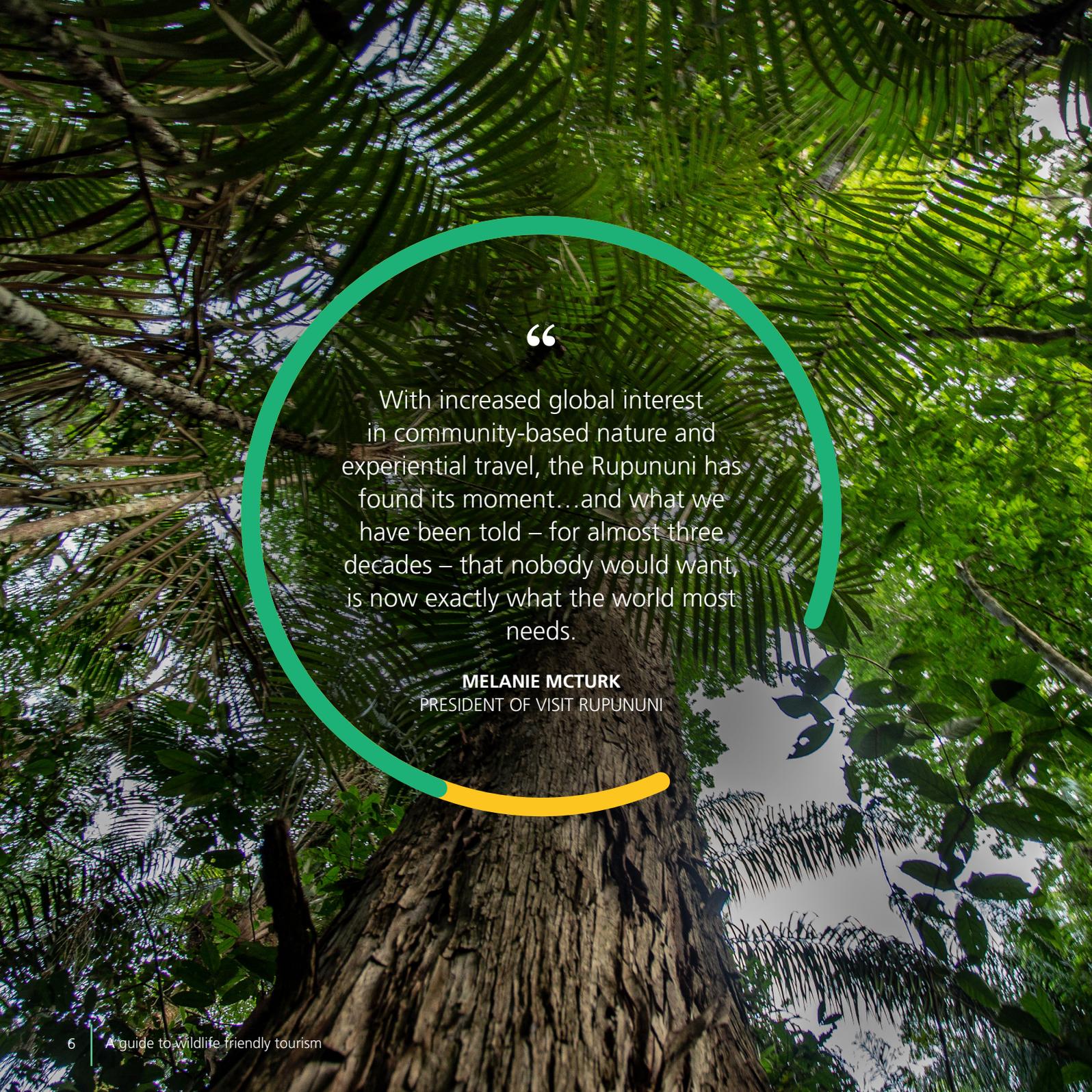
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A South Rupununi view

©Uwe van Dijk/Saddle Mountain



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With increased global interest in community-based nature and experiential travel, the Rupununi has found its moment...and what we have been told – for almost three decades – that nobody would want, is now exactly what the world most needs.

**MELANIE MCTURK**  
PRESIDENT OF VISIT RUPUNUNI

# Foreword

The Visit Rupununi vision is of a high quality, diverse tourism product that spans the length and breadth of the region. It centres on an industry that directly benefits community livelihoods and socioeconomic development within the Rupununi, while actively contributing to the conservation and protection of the Rupununi's unique ecosystems, wildlife and culture.

The realization of this vision is therefore dependent on the success of efforts to actively contribute to the conservation of wildlife and the preservation of the health and wellbeing of the Rupununi landscape and its people. As a ground-breaking organization, Visit Rupununi's membership represents the multitude of opportunities that exist within the regional tourism value chain.

Wildlife is at the heart of who we are in the Rupununi. It is important that tourism operations are aware of the potential harmful impacts of tourism on the environment and wildlife. Our plans and actions, as part of the ecotourism family, should work to mitigate these impacts. But, in order to demonstrate respect for our wildlife, we need to first acknowledge and respect the people, customs and traditions of the communities in which wildlife is found and be aware of the national framework and laws that apply to wildlife in Guyana. We must also educate ourselves, staff and guests about those practices that support wildlife and put systems in place to ensure that they are followed in our tourism operations. This wildlife friendly tourism manual represents the first step in fulfilling our ambition to develop a charter by which Rupununi tourism's development can be guided, now and in the future, and to institutionalizing our commitment to *Keep the Rupununi Wild*.



**Melanie McTurk**  
President Visit Rupununi  
January 2022



# Objectives of this manual

As the Rupununi prepares to host increasing tourism arrivals, we must ensure that we are not causing negative impacts on wildlife, our natural environment and our culture.

This manual gives examples of ways in which tourism operations can work to reduce their negative impacts on wildlife and be a force for positive change. Well-managed wildlife-based tourism is a viable alternative to wildlife hunting and wildlife trade, since it can generate more revenues than those activities over a longer period. This kind of tourism elevates and empowers traditional culture and emphasizes the intrinsic value of the natural world. Well-designed wildlife tourism products encourage people to enjoy and protect animals in the wild and increases the value of wildlife friendly landscapes. With this in mind, Visit Rupununi has partnered with the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme in Guyana to design and commit to good practices that will ensure the development of a common vision of wildlife friendly tourism.

This document has been written and edited by members of Visit Rupununi from community-based and private lodges, villages, ranches and conservation groups. It is intended for use by both existing tourism operators, as well as those new to the Rupununi tourism landscape, by established businesses and by individuals.

This manual has five parts:

- an introduction to the Rupununi's biological and cultural diversity;
- our wildlife friendly tourism agreement;
- simple guidelines to help Rupununi tourism operators engage in wildlife friendly practices;
- real-world examples of how different Rupununi tourism providers promote wildlife friendly practices;
- other resource links that can be used to find out more about the topics discussed.



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# Part I: Background

# The geology and biology of the Rupununi

The Rupununi region stretches from the Acarai Mountains on Guyana's southern border with Brazil to the foothills of the Pakaraima Mountains in the north. It is cleaved east from west by the Rupununi River which gives the region its name, and north from south by the Kanuku Mountains.

When traversing the rivers and mountains of the South Rupununi and Kanuku Mountains, we cross some of the most ancient pieces of land on Earth. Parts of this base rock were formed when the first slivers of continent were welded together by the earliest movements of the Earth's continental crust. Millions of years later, the mountains of the South Rupununi were formed as magma chambers feeding ancient, long-disintegrated volcanoes.

During the time of the dinosaurs, the North Rupununi was formed by a massive fault that pulled the Kanuku Mountains away from the Pakaraimas, leaving a gaping basin in between. This deep hole became an inland ocean which over millions of years filled with sand and mud that oozed from the colossal network of rivers that once flowed over northern South America.

Today, at a much smaller scale, the flow of water over the Rupununi landscape contributes to the region's rich biodiversity. The North Rupununi wetlands serve as a breeding ground for one of the world's most diverse assemblages of freshwater fish. Importantly, during the rainy season, the Amazon and Essequibo watersheds meet in the North Rupununi, permitting fish migrations and crossover between the mighty Essequibo and Amazon river basins.

Even though the vast open savannahs look empty, there were never herds of grazers nor packs of carnivores here: the Rupununi's animals are private and elusive – all the more exciting to see! In fact, the Rupununi is often referred to as the "Land of Giants" because it supports the largest members of several taxa:

**Reptiles and amphibians:** black caiman (*Melanosuchus niger*), giant river turtle (*Podocnemis expansa*), green anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*), gladiator tree frog (*Hypsiboas rosenbergi*).

**Mammals:** jaguar (*Panthera onca*), lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*), giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), giant armadillo (*Priodontes maximus*), giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*).

**Birds:** harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), jabiru (*jabiru mycteria*).

**Fish:** arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*), lau-lau catfish (*Brachyplatystoma filamentosum*).

**Plants:** giant water lily (*Victoria amazonica*).

## Fact box 1

### Rupununi species counted so far

 Reptiles & Amphibians  
**120**

 Fish  
**400**

 Mammals  
**150**

 Plants  
**2 800**

 Birds  
**643**

 Invertebrates  
**Uncounted**

Evi Paemelaere, Ph.D -2019

# The cultural identity of the Rupununi

There are three main groups of Indigenous Peoples in the Rupununi: the Wai Wai, who live in the deep rainforest to the south, and the Wapishana and Macushi, who mainly inhabit the south and north Rupununi savannahs, respectively. Unique to the Rupununi is the vibrancy and richness of these cultures, many aspects of which have been retained and are still part of the daily lives of the people of the region. These provide the foundations of the region's cultural tourism offering.

Historically, Indigenous Peoples formed extensive trade networks across the forest from the Amazon to the Caribbean. This sense of connection, adventure and love for travel across the wide space of the Rupununi still exists today as part of the Rupununi peoples' lifestyle and spirit. It is often highlighted in many of the region's adventure tourism products.

In the late 1860s, cattle were introduced to the Rupununi. This free-range, extensive cattle rearing system has become an important livelihood strategy and grown into an identity that is a blend of the ranching lifestyle and Indigenous culture. From the early 1960s, the ranching culture gave rise to one of the biggest visitor draws in Guyana: the Rupununi Rodeo. It is also a focus of volunteerism in the region.

In the 1980s and '90s, a growing awareness of the economic pressures placed on the Rupununi's ecosystems and especially its wildlife, due to extractive practices, such as hunting, trapping and logging, inspired the first conservation projects in the region. Finding common space with many traditional ideals and attitudes towards the land and its governance, conservation initiatives in the Rupununi are today as well known as the unique wildlife that they protect. These initiatives continue to be a draw for SAVE (Science, Academic, Volunteer, Education) tourism.

In 2021, the Rupununi lifestyle is a blend of farming, ranching, tourism, conservation, entrepreneurship and other activities. By drawing on diverse experiences of life today, while upholding the traditions of a rich past, the Rupununi offers the visitor a unique insight into the challenges and opportunities of the wild landscape.



Savannah Fox (*Cerdocyon thous*)

©Leon Moore

## Fact box 2

### Special conservation areas

The Iwokrama protected area: 371 000 ha of rainforest, managed by the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development. Iwokrama is half wilderness preserve, half sustainable utilization area, where traditional hunting by Indigenous people is permitted. Rangers help ensure Iwokrama's management regulations.

The Kanuku Mountains protected area: In 2011, the Kanukus became a protected area under management of the Protected Areas Commission, which developed a management plan together with the Kanuku Mountain Community Representative Group (KMCRG).

The Kanashen (or Konashen) Community-Owned Conservation Area (KCOCA): Guyana's first community-owned area that is legally protected. This 6 250 km<sup>2</sup> area is managed by the Wai Wai community of Masakenari.

Important bird areas (IBAs): The habitat of the red siskin in South Central Rupununi, is Guyana's first IBA. New IBAs are being developed for other species in North and South Rupununi.

Surama Wilderness Reserve: Surama village in the North Rupununi has established a 4 192 ha wilderness reserve. The area can be used for research and tourism activities that minimally disturb wildlife.

Karanambu private reserve: In the 1990s, Karanambu was set aside as a Private Protected Area by the McTurk family, with the specific objectives of conserving the Rupununi savannahs and wetlands, and protection for the region's giant river otter population.

Community-managed conservation zones: In the South Rupununi, many villages have village-managed wildlife conservation zones and village rules in place to protect vulnerable species.



A white egret is perched on a thin tree branch in a dense, lush green forest. The bird is facing right, with its long neck slightly curved. The background is filled with various types of green foliage, including palm leaves and broad-leafed plants. The lighting is natural, suggesting a sunny day with some shadows.

## Part II: Wildlife friendly tourism agreement

## The Visit Rupununi wildlife friendly tourism

# agreement

1. We learn about, follow and encourage respect for local customs and rules.
2. We protect natural habitats from destructive human disturbance.
3. We do not disrupt or upset the birds, animals or plants that we show our guests.
4. We do not use, serve or sell wildlife, wild meat, crafts or other items from unsustainable sources.
5. We do not promote hunting for sport.
6. We reduce harm in catch and release when sport fishing.
7. We do not have animals in captivity for the purpose of tourism.
8. We include nature, energy efficiency and sustainability in the design of our facilities and services.
9. We reduce and mitigate our generation of waste, use of fossil fuels and use of harmful chemicals.
10. We share our local and scientific knowledge with our guests, colleagues and communities.
11. We contribute to conservation, research and education.
12. We monitor our impact on the environment to ensure we are contributing to positive change.
13. We bring benefits to our communities and encourage local people to practice wildlife friendly behaviours.

Members of Visit Rupununi and the services they offer are recognized as *wildlife friendly* when they demonstrate and practice these values.

*Visit Rupununi*



# Part III: Guidelines for wildlife friendly tourism



# 1. We learn about, follow and encourage respect for local customs and rules

**It is important to know the law and local rules so that we know our rights and can advise others.**

**Remember we are responsible for how our guests and staff behave at our location. We also have the right to advise them of local laws, village rules and our own expectations or rules when they are at our location:**

## ***Respect national laws***

The Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission (GWCMC) is responsible for setting national guidelines and penalties in the interest of protecting the country's biodiversity from degradation or loss.

### **Fact box 3**

Many of our local species are listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered. Therefore, these wild animals are protected in Guyana: hunting, trapping and trading of these species is not permitted.

**The Wildlife Act** protects all vulnerable and endangered species, making it illegal to hunt, trap, trade or disturb them in the wild. There are also regulated open and closed seasons for many other species.

In Guyana there are three types of wildlife species protection:

- i. Protected species that it is illegal to hunt, trap, trade or keep in captivity. This applies to wild animals of any species listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable.
- ii. Species with open and closed seasons and quotas (under development) for hunting, trapping or trading with a licence. This includes all bird species, some reptiles and many mammals.
- iii. Species that can be hunted, trapped or traded year-round with the correct licence.

**The Amerindian Act allows traditional activities, including subsistence, medicine and other animal use, but not sale or trade of protected species.**

### **Fact box 4**

Some species are protected by Guyanese law all year round; for others, closed and open seasons apply. Check for the closed seasons for these species on the next page.

***Know and respect village-level wildlife guidelines***  
In the Rupununi, many villages, communities or districts have their own wildlife rules for residents and guests governing the use of wildlife on their lands. The North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDDB) also has specific guidelines for fishing in the North Rupununi. Find out directly from the relevant village councils.



# CLOSED SEASON FOR REPTILES, MAMMALS AND BIRDS

The trapping, hunting, wounding, killing or sale of the following species is prohibited during the outlined periods.

Species	Closed Season												Open Season				Species	Closed Season												Open Season																			
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	A	B	A	R	A	J	J	U	S	C	O	D	A	B	A	R	A	J	J	U	S	C	O	D		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
<b>DUCKS</b> (Anatidae)																									<b>KINKAJOU</b> (Potos flavus)																								
<b>PARROTS &amp; MACAWS</b> (Psittacines)																									<b>NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO</b> (Dasypus novemcinctus)																								
<b>CURI CURI &amp; ALLIES</b> (Ibis)																									<b>KAPPLER'S ARMADILLO</b> (Dasypus Kappleri)																								
<b>BLACK CURASSOW/POWIS</b> (Crax Aluco)																									<b>TUFTED (BROWN) CAPUCHIN</b> (Cebus Apella)																								
<b>ALL OTHER WILD BIRDS</b>																									<b>RED BROCKET DEER</b> (Mazama Americana)																								
<b>GREEN IGUANA</b> (Iguana iguana)																									<b>WHITE-TAILED DEER</b> (Odocoileus Virginianus)																								
<b>RED-FOOTED TORTOISE</b> (Chelonia Carbonaria)																									<b>SQUIRREL MONKEY</b> (Saimiri Sorex)																								
<b>SIX-BANDED ARMADILLO</b> (Euphractus Sexcinctus)																									<b>LESSER ANTEATER</b> (Tamandua Tetradactyla)																								
<b>TAPIR</b> (Tapirus terrestris)																									<b>PYGMY ANTEATER</b> (Cyclops Wilcoxi)																								
<b>TWO-TOED SLOTH</b> (Choloepus Bidactylus)																									<b>TREE PORCUPINE</b> (Mastomys Protericus)																								

\*The Amerindian Act of 2006 recognizes subsistence rights or privileges owned by Amerindian Villages and Amerindian Communities within their lands.

\*According to the Wildlife Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use Regulations, in order to ensure the continuance of Amerindian traditional rights within the boundaries of Village Lands, the Minister may exempt any Amerindian or group of Amerindians from the provisions of the Regulations relating to the collecting of wildlife. When such exemption is granted, Amerindians shall not use wildlife for any purpose other than subsistence or medicinal purposes, or any other purposes specified by the Minister.

**FAILURE TO RESPECT THESE CLOSED SEASONS CAN RESULT IN FINES OF UPTO \$2,000,000 AND/OR UPTO 3 YEARS IN PRISON.**

Guyana 2021 Species Closed Seasons.

Source: GWCMC

## Fact box 5

### Hunting guidelines within Wapichan Wiizi.

In 2019, the South Rupununi District Council formed the Wapichan Wiizi Wildlife Committee. The committee is composed of six people from different villages. It aims to support sustainable wildlife management in Wapichan Wiizi by creating dialogue, conducting research and supporting village councils in the creation and implementation of guidelines to ensure long-term availability of wildlife as an important part of local livelihoods.

Each village has guidelines to ensure the land stays plentiful. Check with the village council for information.

Common hunting guidelines in Wapichan Wiizi are:

- hunt only what you need for your family's consumption and sharing within the village;
- leave pregnant wildlife to reproduce;
- let young animals grow, only hunt adults;
- let the leader of the peccary pack live;
- if using fire for hunting, avoid uncontrolled fires that may kill wildlife or destroy their habitat;
- practice traditional hunting methods (such as bows and arrows, traditional traps); and
- respect our sacred sites: hunt elsewhere.

### Get permission and pay village fees

Be sure to have permission from the relevant community/land holder before arriving on site. Most communities ask for a small fee per guest, and ask guests to sign in. When developing a new trip, engage the village or owner in advance:

- Have advance meetings with the village council or owner to make sure they understand what activities will be conducted. Confirm what permissions and fees are required to visit. Arrange to use local guides.*
- Close to the date of each visit, confirm with the village council or owner the date and number of visitors.*
- After the visit, follow up with a meeting to complete payments and discuss lessons learned.*

After a few successful visits, steps ii and iii may be more routine.

### See (Example A) The Surama Wilderness Reserve story.

for an example of how wildlife management can complement tourism.



Boa Constrictor

© Duane de Freitas

©Duane de Freitas



# Example A: The Surama Wilderness Reserve story

by **Kenneth Butler**

Surama's community-based tourism business started in 1998. Initially attracting around 47 people annually, it has increased over the years to more than 2 000 visitors every year. The village set aside 419.2 ha as a wilderness reserve for the conservation, protection and preservation of the natural environment for economic, social, spiritual and cultural benefits for the people of Surama through ecotourism. Kenneth Butler explains how:

*We, the Makushi people of Surama, are a savannah-dwelling people dependent on the forest for most of our subsistence needs. Our relationship with the natural environment is a complex one, embedded in ritual practices and belief in a still-magical world, peopled by mythical creatures, both human and animal, to which due respect must be shown.*

*A continuing threat to the Makushi culture is the loss of knowledge of how to care for the forest. Over the years, we have seen the depletion of wildlife because of the growing population putting greater demand on the forest for forest products. Also, there is increased overlapping pressure as many people from other villages rely on the use of the same area. At Surama we witnessed the total disappearance of the sun parakeet (*Aratinga solstitialis*), which once roamed free in abundance. This is because of overexploitation for the wildlife trade. As a result, in 1992, the community took a decision to ban all trapping of wildlife in the Surama area. We also chose to seek alternative food and revenue sources instead of wildlife, and identified a natural reserve area where hunting is banned.*

*The reserve is mainly utilized by our tourism business. It is properly managed for nature tourism, which provides us with job opportunities, thus generating an income for the community.*

*We had to prepare and develop a management plan for our business and land. We spent time establishing an access trail to places of interest which we call the Educational Trail. We developed the Educational Trail within this area to access such things as special trees, camping sites, mountain hikes, historical sites, birding sites and a special place for rediscovering oneself. All this was made available to local and international tourists.*

*The forest is intact for our elders and children to go to from time to time for spiritual and cultural inspiration. This gives our elders the opportunity to pass on to our youths the knowledge of the old ways and values of the flora and fauna. It is a place for us all to visit as a wilderness reserve long into the future.*

*The reserve area is home to many bird species including the mighty harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), Guianan cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola rupicola*) and rufous-winged ground cuckoo (*Neomorphus rufipennis*). We have huge plants like the silk cotton tree (*Ceiba* sp.) and plants of medicinal value, such those that provide the ingredients for the famous curare poison which we use to make poison for our darts. Animals in the reserve include tapir (*Tapius terrestris*), capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), jaguar (*Panthera onca*), giant armadillo (*Priodontes maximus*), giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), howler monkeys (*Alouatta seniculus*), capuchin and many snakes, fish and spiders. All wildlife which could have been lost to us forever.*

## 2. We protect natural habitats from destructive human disturbance

**Healthy wildlife populations are more readily found and observed in areas with little to no disturbance and where human activity is kept to a minimum:**

### **Select appropriate sites**

Choose building, camping, activity or observation sites that will have minimal impact on the behaviour of the species and surrounding environment. Be especially cautious around active nests, colonies and roosts, display sites, feeding or drinking sites.

### **Keep groups small**

Large groups are more likely to damage the environment and scare away the wildlife. This will make it harder for group members to see the animals and hear the interpretation. As an example, for trail walks, a normal group size for one guide is three to four persons.

### **Minimize earth and plant disturbance**

Try to stay on trails; continuous trampling over soils and plants will quickly damage the ecosystem.

### **Avoid unnecessary and careless use of fire**

If burning is thought to be essential, carefully consider the location, wind direction and the length and wetness of the grass. Monitor the fire. Careless burning can be destructive to animals, habitats and property.

### **Leave nothing**

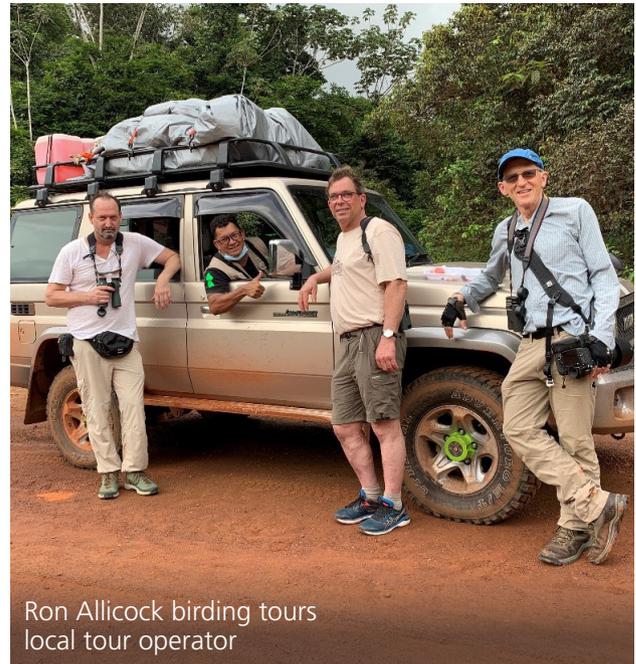
Take all rubbish off the site; that goes for waste food as well.

### **Damage nothing**

When viewing sites and objects of cultural significance, remind guests that nothing should be removed, disturbed, defaced or damaged. **See (Example B) Conservation as the key to our future livelihoods story.**

### **Be careful drivers**

Roads are a growing threat to wildlife. Slow down! Stay on main paths when practical.

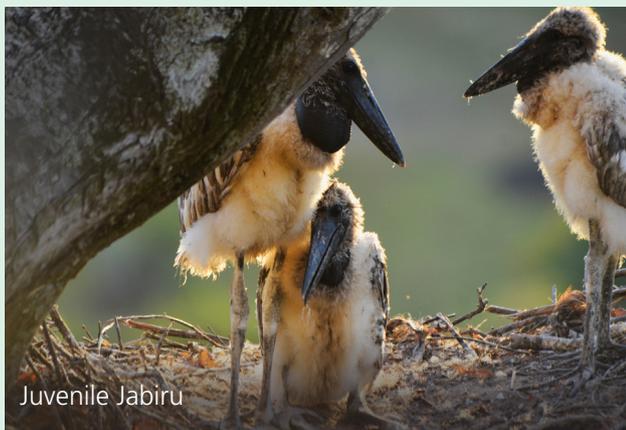


Ron Allcock birding tours  
local tour operator

©Ron Allcock Tours

## Example B: Conservation as the key to our future livelihoods story

by Ron Allcock



©Quatad de Freitas/FAO

Ron Allcock has been a tour operator and guide since 2013. He talks about how ecotourism operators can put conservation at the forefront of their agenda:

*Many stories taught us humans were supposed to be the caretakers of Mother Earth but, instead, we are the most destructive of all the species that live on this planet. Many moons ago, roads penetrated the land in the name of development, which was going to bring some kind of relief from financial burden by accessing the most remote areas to extract natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, bauxite and lumber. With this so-called development came the wildlife hunters, trappers and, of course, the reckless road users, who are completely unaware of the long-term damage they are causing.*

*However, on the positive and more promising side of things, the ecotourism industry has started to pick up momentum and here is where the education of wildlife conservation and protection of natural habitats is emphasized. With the introduction of ecotourism businesses, there has been a small change in which some road users have learned to be more careful and friendly to the wildlife and the environment. With all said and done, it is never too late to put best practices into action. We, as tour operators, guides and drivers, can put conservation at the forefront of our agenda: we can work together, with a little effort, to protect our fragile population of wildlife and their environment.*

*Remember: conservation and preservation are key to our future livelihoods. Without our natural habitats and the protection of our wildlife, there will be nothing to interest our ecotourism travellers. So pristine, primary and intact environments trigger successful eco-friendly businesses.*

*And finally, we must involve communities at all levels with mutual benefits, economically and socially. Communities are the key to our conservation efforts and must be the direct beneficiaries of the businesses. If there is no financial compensation, at the end you will hear this: "Conservation without money is conversation!"*

### 3. We do not disturb or upset the birds, animals or plants that we show our guests

South American animals are particularly shy, and this is part of the excitement of looking for them. Sightings of any animals are all the more interesting because of the challenge. But remember: we shouldn't promise what we can't deliver! Manage the guests' expectations so that they will be happy; this will put less pressure on us to produce wildlife at all costs.

**Wildlife, including birds, should be allowed to move, feed and act naturally:**

***Do not use food to bait wildlife, including birds***

Feeding alters the behaviour of animals, leading to aggression against other animals and guests who feed or do not feed them. The wrong foods or amounts of food can also lead to sickness, disease or poor nutrition.

***Do not touch wild animals***

It is difficult to predict how an animal will react to being touched and animals do not like being harassed by strangers.

***Do not allow guests to pick up wild animals for selfies, use them as props or move them to get a good photograph***

This is a growing practice causing harm and injuries to animals, as well as guests. It's a good idea to let guests know that animal selfies are a "no-no."

***During night photography and spotlighting at night, limit flashing or shining torches directly into the faces of animals and birds***

Flashes might affect nocturnal creatures so please be considerate.

***Don't approach breeding sites***

Whether they are nests, dens, burrows or clearings, breeding sites should be seen from a distance.

***Avoid approaching mothers with young ones***

Mothers with young ones get stressed easily and can react unpredictably.

***Leave pets at home***

Pets can disturb, chase or bring disease, but exceptions are made for necessary animal helpers, e.g. seeing-eye dogs.

***Always consider safety***

Getting everybody home safely is more important than any sighting. Keep the group together and be safe. Remember that in this setting we are the experts.

***See (Example C) The red siskin story and (Example D) Wichabai Ranch's Giant Anteater story.***



Mountain view from Wichabai Ranch

©Tomás Méndez/FAO



## **Specific advice for birdwatching**



### ***Plan ahead!***

In the days before the visit, check the site to find out when and where the target birds are using the area. This can greatly improve the chance of success.



### ***Limit use of recordings***

Groups should limit these methods where areas are heavily birded, for species that are rare in the area or for species that are threatened or endangered. Some groups will not want to use playbacks at all. Remember, playback can stress the birds.



### ***Keep loud vehicles at a distance***

Noisy vehicles should stay out of the birds' habitat. Don't leave vehicles idling when not in use.



### ***Bright colours can scare away some bird species***

For greater success, encourage members of the group to wear clothes that blend in with their environment.

## Example C: The red siskin story

by Leroy Ignacio



Red siskin - endangered species

©Meshach Pierre/SRCS

Leroy Ignacio is from Shulinab, South Central Rupununi. He provides bird guiding, general guiding and transportation services and is the president of the South Rupununi Conservation Society (SRCS). He explains how the story of tourism in the South Rupununi is closely linked to the story of the SRCS and a little bird called the red siskin.

*The success story of the red siskin, bird watching tourism and guiding in the South Rupununi is the result of a long process that was done well from the beginning. The SRCS, our guides, communities and many stakeholders contributed years of silent and invisible effort, which is now becoming recognized. Today, a national guarantee*

*of protection, community support and involvement in the monitoring and protection of the red siskin, plus ongoing research and international interest has helped SRCS to continue its grassroots conservation. National organizations, such as the Guyana Tourism Authority, have recognized SRCS's efforts and are promoting the South Rupununi and the red siskin package nationally.*

*Just over 20 years ago, red siskins were on the brink of extinction. Historically, they had been heavily trapped in their known ranges in Venezuela and sent to Europe to breed as "red canaries." In the year 2000 a research expedition was astonished to discover red siskins right in the South Rupununi, 900 km away from the nearest known population.*

*The existence of a bird trapping trade in Guyana posed a continuing threat to the siskins, and this inspired us to create the SRCS in 2002. We had no formal scientific training, but we found that our understanding of the area and our enthusiasm for its conservation were the best starting points.*

*We became the “guardians” of the red siskin and, over the years, we monitored and protected the species. In 2020, the red siskin habitat in the South Rupununi was officially recognized as Guyana’s first ‘Important Bird Area.’ Now we are working to create a community-managed conservation area for red siskins over their entire Rupununi range.*

*Tourism became connected to the red siskin story early on. The discovery of this bird generated local and international interest, and drew international bird watchers. Although the SRCS is not directly involved in tourism, we recognize that ecotourism can provide opportunities for those engaged in conservation. For example, our rangers are well trained and we encourage them to gain a subsidiary income from guiding. We also ask that an SRCS representative from the nearest village be part of every tourist trip to see siskins; in this way we can ensure that there are ongoing benefits to rangers and villages from tourism and conservation.*

*The red siskin package is off the regular birding loop for the Rupununi, but tourists who choose to see red siskins are contributing directly to conservation, research, education, capacity building and livelihood alternatives. For the SRCS and the South Rupununi guides, these trips are also an opportunity to collect more data on the red siskin. So tourism enables us to keep a close eye on the bird, and vice versa, as we invest more research time into understanding their behaviour and habitat, good sightings for tourists become much more likely, though never guaranteed.*

*The positive impact of this story goes beyond the red siskins: our partner communities, tour operators and ranches promote sustainable tourism as an alternative to bird trapping and other destructive practices; communities involved in red siskin conservation take pride in the bird and are using its protected presence to support community land rights and community conservation; and the SRCS has now diversified into other conservation activities, such as environmental education, river turtle research, fire management research and giant anteater research and conservation. In addition, the involvement in research, conservation and tourism has built the capacity of guides like myself and continues to contribute to skills transfer among the SRCS rangers.*



### **Specific advice for wildlife spotting**

We can increase the chances of good sightings by carefully preparing for our tours. Learn about the habits of the target animals by asking locals and organizing scouting trips beforehand.



#### ***Manage expectations***

Sightings are never guaranteed; remind guests to enjoy the adventure – animal sightings are a bonus.



#### ***Describe best practices for wildlife interactions***

Guests should know what is expected of them before they encounter an animal.



#### ***Use technology***

Good binoculars, scope, spotlights, walkie-talkies and remote viewing systems will make the trip more successful. Camera traps can allow insight into nocturnal or very shy species.



## **Advice for approaching animals**

The aim is to see animals behaving normally in their natural environment. Over time, approaching animals without frightening them will allow them to become accustomed to the presence of humans.



### ***Use a spotter***

One guide should go ahead as the wildlife spotter. A walkie-talkie is helpful. Once they have sighted an animal, they can ensure that the rest of the group approaches carefully.



### ***Approach slowly and quietly***

Never chase down an animal. Stop the vehicle and, if it is safe to do so, get out and walk slowly and calmly towards the animal from downwind. If the animal shows signs of alarm, stop moving.

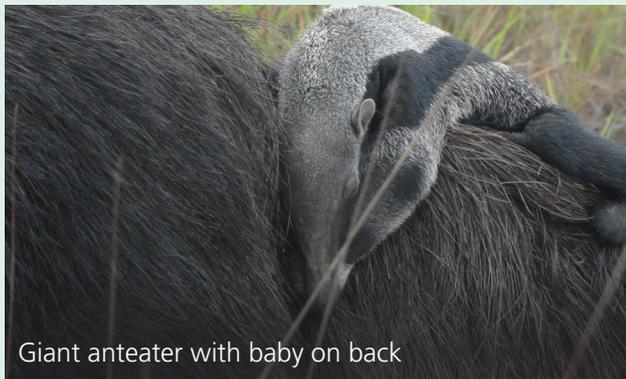


### ***Don't get too close***

Keep a reasonable distance from the animal, for the sake of safety and to make sure that the animal is free to continue its natural behaviour. It is not always easy to tell what "reasonable distance" means for each animal, but fleeing and freezing are the two most common reactions to stress that should warn us that we are too close.

# Example D: Wichabai Ranch's giant anteater story

by Erin Earl



Giant anteater with baby on back

©Nethaneel Wilson/SRCS

Erin Earl describes how Wichabai Ranch uses giant anteater research as an example of how ecotourism, conservation and research work as interconnected fields.

*Wichabai is family owned and run, and conservation has been a family concern for many years. Long before ecotourism started at Wichabai, a group of family and friends set up the South Rupununi Conservation Society (SRCS). Now, our research station is situated at Wichabai, and guests can join in our research and conservation projects while they are visiting.*

*One of our projects is to understand and conserve the South Rupununi's giant anteater population. We see it as another example of how local grassroots conservation efforts can make big impacts. Tourism is an integral part of this effort.*

## **What tourism gained from research and conservation**

*Our studies on giant anteaters started off by understanding their biology. Anteaters are myrmecophagous – they eat ants!*

*Much of their biology and behaviour can be understood by considering this obvious fact. For example:*

- *Ants are low in calories, so, even though a giant anteater will eat tens of thousands of ants every day, that still doesn't add up to much energy. Therefore, anteaters must preserve their energy in every way they can: they move slowly and sleep or rest about 16 hours a day. Running is an energy-intensive activity quickly leading to exhaustion and increased chance of injury from competitors or predators.*
- *Anteaters have evolved to have unusually low body temperatures for their size, and a slow metabolism. Practically, this means that an anteater finds it difficult to control its own body temperature when its surroundings are very hot or very cool. Here in the Rupununi, anteaters thermoregulate by resting in the shade under their massive tails during hot hours. They become more active when it is cooler, and they enjoy the shade and damp of thick swamps.*
- *Ants don't run away quickly, and don't make much noise, so anteaters have evolved a wonderful sense of smell, but poor eyesight and hearing.*

*What does this mean for us as tourism operators? Well, once we understand the biology of the species, we can be more successful and more careful when going wildlife spotting. Here is our technique:*

1. *We remember the weather: at cool times, anteaters are more likely to be foraging. In the hot sun, they will probably be resting in the shade.*

2. *We always keep downwind of that keen nose. If we approach a browsing anteater slowly, from downwind, staying still and keeping low when he seems alert, then we can get quite close to him without causing any distress.*
3. *We never chase the anteater by bike, vehicle or on foot or horseback. This would cause particular stress to the species.*

*Even more than that, our camera traps are recording behaviour of giant anteaters that has never been recorded by science, and we are learning to interpret the meanings of their marks and actions. When guests visit us, they can take part in anteater tracking expeditions, learn how to set camera traps and gather useful data about this enigmatic species. So, even if no anteater is sighted, we have a great morning out!*

### **What research and conservation have gained from tourism**

*Guests carry out SRCS surveys when they go anteater tracking, and their photographs, often on much better cameras than we can afford, are used to identify individual anteaters. This data all contributes to SRCS's research goals. In fact, some anteaters have been named after the guests who were present when the anteater was first seen.*

*The success of this project has led to a drive by Katoonarib Village to create an "Anteater Safe Zone." Covering all the village land, this zone will protect giant anteaters in their natural habitat using village rules, education and outreach, and by investment in non-consumptive wildlife-based livelihoods, including ecotourism and craft. The training and employment that these livelihoods offer is a way to bring benefits to local people who are already invested in protecting the biodiversity of their lands.*

*Finally, we encourage other operators to invest in research and conservation – there is so much yet to be understood about this little-studied region!*



Guests and guides - Wichabai Ranch

©Robin Barnwell/Wichabai Ranch

### **Specific advice for clearing trails and showing plants**



#### ***Clear a modest path***

Minimise disturbance by clearing just enough vegetation so the group can pass easily and use naturally occurring trails and pathways where possible.



#### ***Look but don't touch***

Avoid breaking plants to show to guests; it is destructive and some species have dangerous saps, thorns, etc. Please never encourage guests to take wild plants home with them, especially if the plant is rare or endangered.

## 4. We do not use, serve or sell wildlife, meat, crafts or other items from unsustainable sources

The use of meat and other materials that come from wildlife and plants in crafts and ornamentation is an aspect of Rupununi life that is closely linked to our culture and intimate relationship with the land. However, like many other traditional practices, this was never intended to service a large tourist community. We should therefore carefully consider if some items should be offered to tourists at all, and always think about whether they come from sustainable sources.

### Specific advice for craft makers and sellers

Wildlife-based handicrafts can allow income from tourism to filter through to more people in the community. Yet care must be taken to ensure these crafts and souvenirs are made with sustainably sourced materials, and do not negatively affect animal or plant abundance.

When making or selling craft made with natural materials please consider:

No thanks

#### ***From which animals or plants do these parts come?***

If they are on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) lists, protected in Guyana, protected by villages or known to be locally vulnerable, then say “no thanks” and find an alternative.



#### ***Are these plant and wildlife parts obtained in a sustainable way?***

Do not encourage people to kill wildlife for their teeth, scutes, bones, spines, feathers or shells. Materials from plants need to be harvested in a way that will not harm the plant and allow harvesting for years to come. Can these plants be farmed rather than taken from the wild? If they are in short supply, can other materials be used?



#### ***Can the harvested materials be replaced?***

If harvesting from a plant in the wild, plant two to three new ones for each one taken so that they can continue to be harvested in the future.



#### ***Can the item be made with more wildlife friendly material?***

Crafts based on traditional designs that use materials from protected or vulnerable species, e.g. macaw-feather headdresses, should be kept for important occasions and used locally. Such items can also be a problem for tourists to take home because of local laws. Crafts sold to tourists can be made with alternative materials (e.g. by using feathers from domestic birds) perhaps with an explanation attached.

***See (Example E) The Wabbani project at Caiman House, Yupukari*** for examples of sustainable use of materials.

**Table 1: Dos and don'ts concerning the purchase of local handcraft**

Yes, please...	No, thanks...
grass earrings, hair ties and brooches	macaw-feather headdress
leather belts, bands and knife sockets	jaguar-tooth or caiman-scute jewellery
earrings made from domestic bird feathers	crafts from parts of protected species
snail-shell earrings	armadillo-shell or river turtle-shell spindle
fish-scale jewellery from common fish	arapaima-scale jewellery
most items made from wood, nuts, seeds, beads, cotton, cattle bone/horn and many plant materials	items made from plants that are rare or take a long time to grow



©Wabbani

# Example E: The Wabbani project at Caiman House, Yupukari

by Alice Layton



Wabbani product

©Wabbani

Wabbani is a collaborative craft with participants from Yupukari and its satellite areas. They partner with a for-purpose US-based company, Wabbani LLC, in order to market and sell online, ship and export.

*Two women's groups grow, spin and weave cotton, using traditional hammock techniques, but we apply them to hanging lampshades with moonwood frames. These require less cotton, less time and less skill.*

*A potters' group has achieved expertise in making knobs for cabinet doors from wood-fired river clay, molding them with traditional indigenous imagery. We are developing skill in making tuma pots with the aim of creating a line of dinnerware based on its form.*

*Plaiters in all the villages have learned to precisely engineer three traditional shoomba patterns – anaconda, diamondback and deer trail – to match as panels across cabinet doors in many different sizes.*

*We also make cowhide chairs and mukru tables, at smaller scale... for now.*

### **Conservation practices**

*Mukru (Ischnosiphon arouma; a plant with fibers used in basketry and other craft) offtake is monitored via GPS, and we rotate locations. The rods are individually selected – no clearcutting – and stripped where they are harvested, with all the ‘waste’ left in place to fertilize the area. Since all of our mukru plaiters live near the resource, these areas are protected from burning.*

*In a similar way, our cotton farm is protected by the spinners and weavers earning from it. We are starting to implement an agroforestry plan, whereby we start tree seedlings at the farm so that as the cotton yield diminishes, trees bearing fruits and nuts, and other useful species replace it. Pests are managed via a neem/tobacco mixture – no pesticides allowed!*

*We are now on our third kiln design, which is the most efficient by far in terms of conserving the amount of wood needed to reach desired temperatures for fired clay. This kiln is also much larger, so we need fewer firings.*

*The only animal product we use is cowhide, which in our area is a waste product from beef production. We do not base any of our craft on wild animals or birds.*

*An area in which we need to improve is wood harvesting. Although we avoid using precious hardwoods, we do rely on young moonwood, but have yet to develop a policy and strategy for growing or protecting it.*

### **What we’ve learned about crafts**

- *Elevate, don’t diminish: Rather than shrink traditional arts down to trinkets, we scale them up into desirable home decoration which commands a higher price.*
- *Innovate and transform: Visitors don’t usually have a need for arrows, but they do use many items which can be formed from arrowheads (for example). Likewise, a miniature sifter is more or less a dust-collector, but a sifter picture frame fits their lifestyle.*
- *Recover the lost or fading: Clay, for example, was a forgotten medium, and forming it was a forgotten art in our area. Now our cabinet knobs are the best-selling item we make.*
- *Engage the local experts: By paying highly skilled artisans salaries to lead and teach others over time, we’ve been able to grow our artisan pool. The most important thing is to find a way to keep your core group learning and earning.*
- *Maintain quality controls: Particularly if artisans are working at home, they need to be clear (and management needs to be consistent) about what qualifies for payment, at what rate and for what products.*
- *Flatten the hierarchy: The number one goal of management should be to grow the skills and confidence of newer members, giving every interested person opportunities to learn, to lead and, most importantly, to take risks and fail, in a safe environment.*

## Specific advice for food and beverage operators

**The Rupununi is becoming depleted of fish and game. Our decisions about what to eat and serve can greatly impact the survival of those species in our area. We encourage all food providers to be proactive in the effort to reduce consumption of vulnerable wild meat and fish species:**



### ***Use local food sources, but only where those are legal, sustainable and ethical.***

Locally caught and sold meat, fish and other produce provides a source of income for community members who may not be directly involved in tourism. At the same time, try not to encourage people to take too much of a limited resource to help ensure that it will be there in the future.



### ***Choose fire-free honey***

For sustainable gathering of honey it is best to reap from hives and apiaries in the wild without the use of fire. Fires can permanently damage the hive and the bee colony can become uncontrollable.



### ***Decide how much wild-caught fish to eat, considering the species, when, where and how it is caught***

Rupununi fish stocks are being depleted. Look in detail at local and national guidelines for fishing, and make sure our suppliers understand and follow these regulations. Even if legal, some fishing practices, like seines and poisons, are very destructive. Arapaima is illegal to harvest. Useful resources are available (e.g. from NRDDDB and SRDC) to help us decide which fishes to use, and when.



### ***Select ethically farmed fish***

Using locally farmed fish is usually a better option than taking from the wild. If there are local fish farmers who maintain healthy fish stocks in clean pools and do not allow chemicals or polluted water back into the natural environment, then encourage and use their produce.



### ***Reduce or eliminate wild meat consumption***

Almost all game species are being depleted in the Rupununi. While it may be wonderful to share traditional food with guests, the hunting of deer, capybara, tapir, armadillo, peccary and many other Rupununi species is, in most cases, unsustainable. Please think seriously about the impact of buying or hunting wild meat and whether it needs to be present at the guests' table. **See (Example F) Guyana Truly Wild's story.**



### ***Farmed meats***

Using locally farmed meat is usually a better option than taking from the wild. We recommend buying from local producers who keep healthy animals (including chickens) in spacious, clean conditions with access to the outdoors. Purchase all beef through the Lethem abattoir, through a supplier that gets it from the abattoir or directly from the producer. In the future, this could also include farmed meat from capybara or labba – if this is the case make sure to buy from an accredited location.

## Example F: Guyana Truly Wild's story

by Ashley Holland



©Brent Stirton/Getty Images for FAO, CIRAD, CIFOR and WCS

Guyana Truly Wild specializes in tailor-made river and camping expeditions into the heart of Guyana's wild and remote landscapes. Founder Ashley Holland describes their fish and wild meat harvesting practices.

*Hunting and utilizing the natural resources in a sustainable way is a part of the Indigenous culture. Generally, and in particular for tourism, we discourage the use of wild meat, but occasionally some guests want to see and experience this first-hand as it is part of the way of life in the region.*

*Having said that, we need to be very, very sensitive and sensible about using natural resources, in particular hunting wild meat and wild fish for guests.*

*Many years ago, we would occasionally hunt on remote river trips to supplement dry rations but nowadays we rarely do this. If we do, it would only be on very long river trips where resupplying is very difficult or impossible.*

*Before utilizing any source of wild meat we would first check with the guests if they find it acceptable and gauge their response and reaction. We would only go ahead if the guests were happy with it.*

*Additionally, any harvesting of wild meat or fish would only be species that are not protected or rare. Utmost care is taken in ensuring that the harvesting of game and fish is done in a way that is as ethical and humane as possible.*

## 5. We do not promote hunting for sport

We are all aware that hunting remains an important part of the Rupununi lifestyle both as an aspect of culture and as a source of protein. However, it is important to make the distinction between sustainable hunting practices that do not diminish healthy populations, hunting for the purposes of subsistence living, and hunting and killing for entertainment or sport. Hunting and killing for sport goes against the culture of the Rupununi and is unnecessarily destructive. Most villages and district councils explicitly or implicitly ban unsustainable hunting and sport

or trophy hunting by asking residents and guests to “take only what is needed” or “kill only what you can consume.” Protected sites like Iwokrama and Karanambu expressly forbid it.

### *Make messaging clear*

Communicate clearly where hunting is not allowed and encourage members of the community not to overhunt key areas and species.

### *Don't post pictures that can give the wrong message*

It's easy on social media and in marketing campaigns for people to get the wrong idea, so avoid posting images of fresh kills or animal selfies.



Indigenous man fishing with seine

©Quaad de Freitas/FAO

## 6. We reduce harm in catch and release when sport fishing

**When done properly, sport fishing can bring benefits to communities. Guidelines for the safe release of fish coupled with excellent fisheries management can ensure that conservation outcomes arise from the operations and profitability is promoted.**

**Recommendations on reducing harm to fish:**

### ***Understand and respect local and national fishing regulations***

See the Fisheries Department website for national regulations. Some villages and districts have specific guidelines for fishing, for example, see the NRDDDB Fisheries Management Plan. The International Game Fish Association has tips and best practices.

**See (Example G) Fisheries management story.**

### ***Prioritize fish safety and data collection***

Clear guidelines for guests and staff are an important aspect of effective catch and release.

**See (Example H) The story of sport fishing in Rewa.**

### ***Don't set seines across creek mouths or across the river***

This destructive practice blocks the waterways for all species living in the water and is especially destructive when practised during spawning season.

### ***Use barbless, circle hooks***

Circle hooks set in the side of the mouth reduce the risk of tearing the mouth or the hook being swallowed, which can cause fatal damage.

### ***Use a clean landing net to help get the fish in the boat***

A landing net helps get the fish in faster so there is a greater chance of a successful release.

### ***Don't handle the fish too much***

Release them quickly; their slime helps protect them.

### ***Release the small fish and the fish caught during spawning season (May to August)***

We need to allow fish to continue to reproduce. The big ones are often the breeding stock and produce more offspring; so let them go during the spawning season.

### ***Fish only what is needed***

The best way to ensure that the resources will be there in future is to ensure we do not overuse or waste resources now.

# FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN THE NORTH RUPUNUNI



*Taking only what you need*



*This area is being managed by the Communities of the North Rupununi District in partnership with the Fisheries Department and is subject to management guidelines as laid out by the Arapaima and General Fisheries Management Plans.*

SWM SUSTAINABLE  
WILDLIFE  
MANAGEMENT  
PROGRAMME



# Example G: Fisheries management story

by NRDDB



Boat travelling on the river

©Brent Stirton/Getty Images for FAO, CIRAD, CIFOR and WCS

Sport fishing can bring benefits to communities, but a sustainable sports fishing business must be built on a healthy fish population. To ensure healthy fisheries, fish management is necessary. Recognizing a lack of national regulations, since 2002, the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB) has been working on general fisheries management and arapaima management in the Rupununi, Rewa and Essequibo Rivers.

*In 2019, the NRDDB, with support from the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme (SWM), began to implement its fisheries management plan. This includes river patrols to meet with fishers and advise on best practices, involvement in national policy and research on fish populations, and fish consumption (how much fish people eat) surveys in communities.*

*There are several species of arapaima and Guyana's species are endemic (they exist only here). The NRDDB has been able to show a slow but steady growth of this fish through their surveys.*

## **Guyana's waterways are home to world-famous game fish species including:**

- *hiamara (Hoplias aimara)*
- *lukanani (Cichla ocellaris)*
- *basha (Plagioscion sp.)*
- *black pirhana (Serrasalmus rhombeus)*
- *swordfish (Boulengerella cuvieri)*
- *arawana (Osteoglossum bicirrhosum)*
- *culit (Pseudoplatystoma sp.)*
- *lao lao and blinka (Zungaro zungaro)*
- *skeet/banana fish (Phractocephalus sp.)*
- *tigerfish (Pseudoplatystoma fasciatum).*

# Example H: The story of sport fishing in Rewa

by **Rovin Alvin**

In Rewa, poor job security led villagers to illegally harvest and trade wild animals. As a result, wildlife species such as arapaima, giant river turtles and giant otters were beginning to disappear. In 2005, the village opened a community-run ecolodge to improve livelihoods while protecting ecological diversity. The lodge was initiated using beneficiary funds from Conservation International. The sports fishing business was built with support from the Guyana Tourism Authority and Costa Del Mar. Rovin Alvin tells us more:

*By employing community members as sport fishing guides and boat captains, the lodge allows villagers to maintain rainforest-based livelihoods without causing damage to the ecosystem. As a result of tourism, arapaima, turtles and otters are now common in the Rewa River. Visitors now contribute far more money to the local economy than wildlife exploitation did.*

*Rewa has been hosting catch and release sport fishing for arapaima since 2011. Simple guidelines for arapaima fishing have been developed based on the experience and a research programme, thus ensuring that the species can be released safely for ongoing business.*

## **Simplified guidelines for arapaima fishing**

- Arapaima fishing is only done in the months of November, February and March.
- To reduce disturbance only fish the same pond once in a given week.
- Casting to fish that have babies /juveniles is prohibited.
- No fishing is allowed during spawning.
- Only prescribed tackle can be used:
  - Rods - 12 weight single handed rods.
  - Reels: large arbor reels.

- Fly line: intermediate and floating.
- Hook sizes: 6/0 to 8/0.
- Flies: can be tied with single hooks; No double hooks are allowed.
- Hookup and landing process should be done quickly with help of a team to minimize harm to the fish.
- Keep handling to a minimum and use hand gloves for holding on dorsal fins.
- Use fishing pliers to remove hooks safely and quickly.
- Allow the science team to collect critical data on the specimen.
- Have stills camera at the ready and do not spend a lot of time taking pictures.
- Guest and photographer must listen to instructions or any advice given by the guide.
- At release, make sure the fish have had about 4–5 breaths depending on size.
- After release, the science team must record the number of breaths taken for at least 1 hour.
- Follow the bobber and remove it after 1 hour.

## **Simplified guidelines for sport fishing for smaller species**

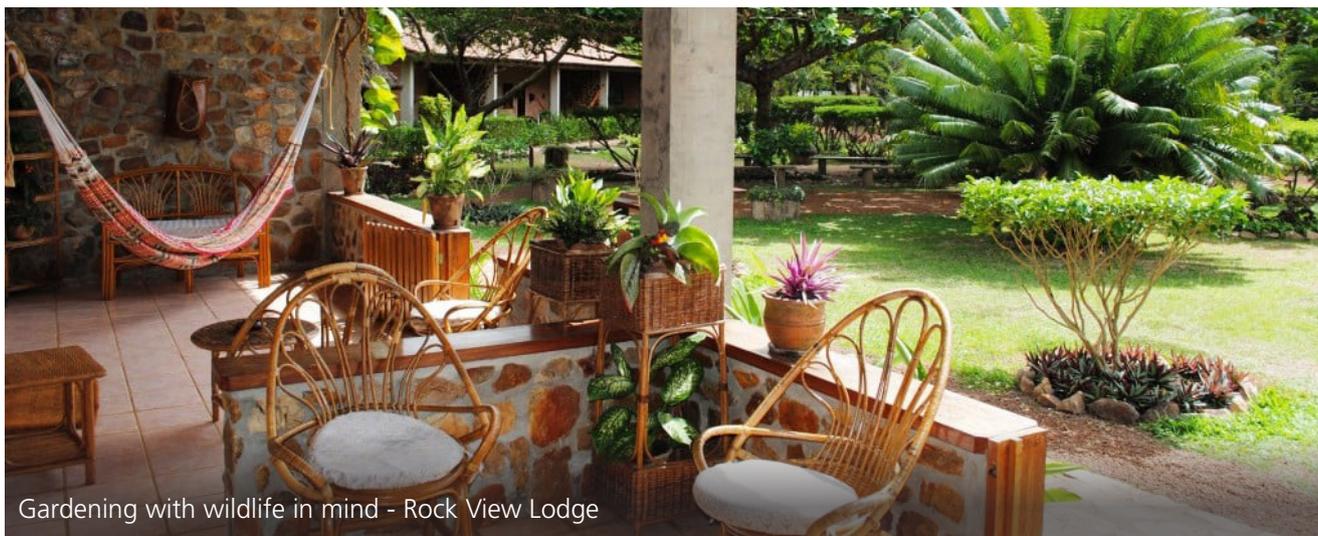
*Top water feeders, e.g. lukanani/peacock bass, piranha, swordfish, etc.*

- For safer release when fly or spin fishing, use streamers and poppers with single hooks that are easy to remove.
- Take your time during hook removal, especially when using a lure that has a triple hook.
- Do not release fish that are bleeding or have injured eyes.

*Bottom feeders e.g. catfish, piranha and wolf fish*

- Use single, circle hooks only, size 7/0 to 8/0.
- After a fight, give catfish time to recover strength before release.

## 7. We do not have animals in captivity for the purpose of tourism



Gardening with wildlife in mind - Rock View Lodge

©VisitRupununi

**Keeping wild animals as pets is a practice common in many of the region's communities, but should not be done for the purposes of tourism or to entertain tourists. As a general rule, it is cruel and unkind to take an animal from its family or keep it from moving and feeding freely. Many tourists, especially international tourists, can also find it very disturbing to encounter animals in captivity:**

***Don't promote keeping birds and other wildlife in captivity***

Don't encourage people to catch, buy or keep animals for tourists to see.

**See (Example 1) Rock View Lodge's story** for alternatives to keeping wildlife as pets.

***Keep wild animals and domestic animals apart***

Domestic animals are exposed to a range of diseases that could be harmful to wild animals, e.g. distemper. Similarly, domestic animals can be harmed by diseases that exist in wild populations.

***Treat all animals humanely***

All animals, including horses, cows, chickens, goats, pigs and even cats and dogs need to be able to move about and have access to food, water and shelter.

**Further, the practices of trapping, transporting or keeping privately or for profit is closely regulated under law by the GWCMC.**

# Example I: Rock View Lodge's story

by Colin Edwards

Rock View Lodge was created from a former cattle ranch to become a “home away from home” experience managed by the Edwards family. Colin Edwards talks about how the environment around the lodge was managed to encourage biodiversity, and what they learned about keeping pets.

*The vision was to provide a hospitality experience that gives visitors from the city an opportunity to experience nature and the country life. We constructed the lodge with appropriate materials sourced from the environment around us and in harmony with the people who inhabit the North Rupununi and their culture.*

*Wildlife needs plant life to survive, and so Rock View has turned the original savannah into landscaped gardens with flowering plants and fruiting trees on which the birds and other animals can survive and live happily together. We focused on plants that would not only blend in with the natural habitat but also would provide sustenance to the wildlife around and that could be used as decoration in the accommodation to the lodge as a whole.*

*The biggest challenges were to improve the fertility of the sandy loam soil of the savannah and to retain moisture for the plants during the long dry periods. This was achieved by using organic cow manure gathered from the corrals of the neighbouring ranches and watering the plants frequently from open pit wells. Eventually sufficient shade was created by the plants themselves and a healthy worm population could naturally turn over the soil and create humus to retain water for the plants to thrive.*

*The trees are identified with name plates that not only state the common name but also the botanic name and uses of the plants themselves. The gardens are laid out with paths and walkways that allow people to walk along without having to cross the well-kept grass lawns. They lead from the cabins across to various points of interest, such as the lookout at Inspiration Rock where guests can witness the sunrise beside the mighty Makarapan Mountain or the fishponds where guests can see arapaima fish being fed.*

*As in many Indigenous homes, we started to care for orphaned wildlife as pets that were offered to us by members of the community. We did so in a way that we considered respectful, in semi-captivity. However, we quickly learned from feedback received that visitors would prefer not to see wildlife in semi-captivity.*

*As a result, it became apparent to us that the emphasis should be on training our own guides as birding and wildlife specialists with a wide knowledge of the birds, animals, insects, trees and shrubs that make up our environment that is so different from the one from which visitors have come. Bird lovers and tour operators have now recognized Rock View as a hub for exploring the diverse habitats and a place to share their experiences. The lodge provides comfort with easy access to the rainforest and community ecolodges in the North Rupununi.*

*We have learned that it is important for each lodge to identify its strengths and to support each other in a way that will avoid competition but rather offer a rich and varied experience for visitors during their stay in the Rupununi, portraying harmony among the lodges.*

## 8. We include nature, energy efficiency and sustainability in the design of our facilities and services

**Dedication to the environment starts with the choices that we make before building: from the building's location, to materials needed, how large it will be, or even whether it will be a permanent structure or just a camp site.**

Here are some guidelines:

***Choose a site which can be used without disturbing delicate habitats***

As well as the building or camping site, think about the impacts of access roads and water supplies.

***Seek permissions to build and use the land in this way***

Follow the correct logging permits and procedures; visit the Guyana Forestry Commission's office in Lethem or their website at <https://forestry.gov.gy> to find out more. Villages can give permission to build on village land, but outside village titles, authorization is required from the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. In addition, any development within a private lease needs the consent of the owners.

***Minimize damage to the environment in every part of construction and use***

How will construction waste and toxic waste (e.g. batteries from solar) and rubbish be reduced and safely disposed of? How will we be sure not to pollute waterways?

***Use natural, traditional plants and materials where possible***

Using organic materials, where practical, leads to buildings that are easier to keep cool.

Incorporate trees, flowers and water sources into the design; this quickly creates a habitat for birds and other wildlife.

***Use renewable energy like solar or wind***

As well as being quieter and better for the environment, this will reduce long-term costs.

***Plan how to deal with waste, including wastewater***

Latrines, septic tanks and soak always should be downwind of accommodation and eating places, and at least 30 m from water sources. Grey water (water from showers and taps) can be diverted to kitchen gardens and flower beds.

***See (Example J) Saddle Mountain's story: Being kind to the land and (Example K) Waikin Ranch's story: Adding value to the land*** for different examples of caring for the land.



Saddle Mountain sunset - South Rupununi

©Luke McKenna



# Example J: Saddle Mountain's story: Being kind to the land

by Michelle Kenyon

Saddle Mountain was set up and is being run by the Kenyon family who host tourists to stay with the family and join in the daily ranching activities:

*Saddle Mountain Ranch is an oasis nestled in the South Rupununi foothills; a working cattle ranch that was established about 30 years ago by our family. The ranch is full of exciting adventures, with delicious home-cooked meals, stunning landscapes and plenty of opportunities to become immersed in an authentic Guyanese ranching lifestyle.*

*In the Rupununi, livestock is reared in a dramatically different way from other areas in the world. This region has been home to comparatively low-impact extensive cattle ranching for more than 150 years, demonstrating that cattle ranching can be done in an environmentally kind and sensible way.*

*The Rupununi is an ecologically sensitive landscape and our family, like others in the Rupununi, has a high level of environmental consciousness. All work done in the landscape is done in a way that is sensitive to the local ecological conditions, which are extreme! One cannot fight or tame the forces of the sun and rain; we can only learn how to take advantage of them.*

*Therefore, the cattle are reared on the open range, and are able to roam freely with minimum impact on the environment. There are no fences, no pastures and no fertilizers; just hundreds of animals spread out over hundreds of square kilometres, forming their own small herds as they roam where they choose to find the water and the best feeding grounds. In this way, the land does not suffer from overgrazing, erosion or pollution of water sources and there is no loss of land access for local people or wild animals.*

*Of course, this method of ranching has its limitations, and small-scale tourism is one way to supplement the limited income from cattle sales, as well as a way for us to share the joy of the open savannah and the lifestyle we love. One thing we have learned is to make sure our guests know what to expect before they arrive. This is especially true for all locations offering off-the-beaten-track tourism like us.*

*Guests join in the day-to-day activities on the ranch: learn how to throw a lasso (which dad makes by hand from rawhide), join in the action in the corral and head out on horseback to roundup the cattle. On evening horseback rides, we can often get much closer to wild animals than a vehicle or even a person on foot.*

*Ultimately, tourists who come to Saddle Mountain can become totally immersed in the natural environment. It is a form of escapism for our guests, but for us it is a way of life.*

# Example K: Waikin Ranch's story: Adding value to the land

by Fran Pires

Waikin Ranch is located in the large township of Lethem, in Central Rupununi, with its western edge along the Ireng River that serves as the Guyana/Brazil boundary. Once these 13 000 ha were part of the 78 000 ha of Pirara's cattle ranch. Today, Fran Pires talks about how she and her family faced challenges, but ultimately found their perseverance is paying off:

*This land is being developed with the intention of adding value in more ways than one. Exploring the lands gave us a sense there were hardly any animals, but lots of signs of hunting, poaching and overfishing. From our agricultural background, we knew more could be done here, even on these too often burnt, overexposed soils. Our environment is fragile when taken for granted and when conservation and valuable traditions are lost or abandoned. A major threat has been the fires from both outside and inside Waikin's intended 4 000 ha fenced perimeter, which we use to control livestock grazing. Fire endangers both creatures and vegetation in its path, sometimes with multiple days of burn, and a ravaged landscape is left exposed.*

*Since breaking ground in 2011, the ranch has developed and within it many trees have been planted and water catchments created. The ranch started with cows, and we added pigs, horses, chickens, dogs and cats. Digging earth*

*for ponds revealed the natural spring waters, which filled the ponds easily and provided more opportunities for life to abound. There were lots of types of birds to go with the landscaping. Evidence of animal droppings and prints left behind in the softer soils and wildlife sightings continue to thrill us. Few find it believable that all they can see now – with the forest trees (samaan and teak) towering over, casting much-needed shade and serving as wind breaks; and the breadfruit, avocados, plantain, cherries, royal palms, coconut trees and cashew trees – were all planted there less than a decade ago. Many crops planted provided even more avenues for the fauna to be easily enticed; and now the songs and chatter of what has been identified as over 200 birds make their presence known here. Anteaters, capybaras, red-toed land tortoises and possums we call "yowrie" are often spotted. Some other notable sightings include tamanduas, spider monkeys, a puma, raccoons, frogs, bats, iguanas, snakes, armadillos and a variety of fishes. There also was an adorable delicate mouse opossum!*

*If ever the discussion is about coexistence being possible, tell them the story about Waikin Ranch. We believe what we have created is the living proof you can have development, wildlife conservation, agriculture and tourism in harmony to provide valuable services to the community and the country.*

## 9. We reduce and mitigate our generation of waste, use of fossil fuels and use of harmful chemicals

**Create a culture of care for resources and put practices and policies in place to reduce, reuse and recycle:**

### ***Conserve water wherever practical***

Collect rainwater, reuse sink water in the garden and use a basin rather than running water when washing up.

### ***Reduce or eliminate use of single-use items***

Consider waste every time a product is made, wrapped, packed, bought or sold. Invest in metal, enamel or good quality melamine plates, cutlery, drinking vessels and serving containers.

### ***Reduce waste from water bottles***

Provide reusable water bottles or encourage guests/drivers/guides to bring their own and provide unlimited drinking water for them to refill.

### ***Reduce, reuse and recycle everything possible***

Buy items with less packaging. Find ways to repurpose boxes, donate useful containers, and compost food items or feed to domestic animals.

### ***Buy local produce***

Village groups and individuals produce jams, dried fruits, sauces, wines, seasonings and a huge variety of other ingredients to make meals more interesting, and buying from local businesses reduces the environmental cost associated with buying mass-produced items.

**Long-term damage can be caused to ecosystems when contaminants enter soils or waterways and can pose a danger to humans and animals alike.**

- Untreated water waste should not go directly into waterways.
- Don't wash vehicles in creeks or rivers.
- Pit latrines should be deep, downhill of any water supply. They should have a short life and at the end the ground should be covered back fully, and the area left to rest.
- Ensure our business and suppliers either do not use pesticides or fertilizers at all or use them only with great care so that they do not reach waterways and damage the surrounding environment.
- **See the Environmental Protection Agency for further guidelines.** [www.epaguyana.org](http://www.epaguyana.org)

**See (Example L) Karanambu's story: Reducing waste.**



Reusable water bottles at Karanambu Lodge, North Rupununi

©Melanie McTurk

# Example L: Karanambu's story: Reducing waste

by Melanie McTurk



©Amanda Richards/Karanambu Lodge

Featuring local products - Karanambu Lodge, North Rupununi

Karanambu was first established in the 1920s and started formal tourism operations in the 1990s. As tourist arrivals increased, Karanambu became increasingly aware of the negative impact that this could have on the environment, the wildlife and the quality of their tourism product. One of the areas of greatest concern was the plastic and packaging waste being produced. Melanie McTurk talks about how Karanambu addressed this issue.

*On review, Karanambu found that a party of six people staying only two nights were using an average of 100 plastic bottles in various sizes. This plastic, along with other waste items produced, was posing a threat to the environment around us. It was a danger to wildlife, created problems of disposal on both land and in the river, and was generally unsightly.*

*Here are a few things we did to reduce our waste:*

## **Replace plastic water bottles with reusable ones**

*Rather than plastic bottled water in cabins, we started providing clean well water in reusable glass bottles. On trips/excursions, we replaced individual plastic bottled water with personal reusable bottles. At the bar, we provided a large dispenser of drinking water. These measures were complemented by “watering holes” around the compound where guests could refill personal bottles from larger five-gallon dispensers. Guests were happy to cooperate with the new measures, and overnight we saw our plastic waste reduced by almost 90 percent!*

### **Use reusable cups and reusable containers**

*Karanambu is famous for its Karanambu rum punch. Almost as iconic as the rum punch itself are the stainless steel cups, which, in addition to being a Karanambu tradition, are more durable and sustainable than plastic cups.*

*Karanambu now also serves exclusively homemade snacks and beverages, stored in reusable containers, on excursions, instead of store-bought or canned items which create packaging waste.*

*Along with the Karanambu tradition that guides guarantee all items used on an outing are returned to the kitchen, these practices ensure that Karanambu outings produce zero waste.*

### **Buy local and keep it homemade**

*Food made from products that are grown in the region have less packaging than food brought in from outside. Karanambu has a policy that, wherever possible, we buy local or fresh items.*

*For items that we bring into our location, we select items sold in bulk or in reusable containers. For example, we buy coconut milk and tomato paste in glass jars that we can wash and reuse. Glass bottles can be used to sell cassareep, pepper sauce or honey to guests. Glass jars can be used as drinking glasses, to store marmalade or as storage for spices. Larger containers can be used as buckets, storage for drinking water or as storage to protect food items from pests and moisture.*

*Whenever possible we try to avoid items packaged in tins or other non-compostable materials. For example, condensed milk and cream can be found in Lethem packaged in cardboard boxes. These can be flattened and destroyed when we burn in our pits each month.*

### **Plastic and paper in the kitchen**

*We all know how useful plastic wrap, paper towels, paper napkins and aluminum foil are in the kitchen. But Karanambu is trying to reduce the use of these items: we keep on hand a large number of dish towels and ten percent bleach solution for wiping down countertops and spills; we have a separate set of more decorative cloths to cover prepared food; and instead of paper napkins, Karanambu uses cloth napkins at the dining table.*

### **Toiletries**

*While mini versions of products such as shampoo and conditioner can be very cute, they result in a great deal of packaging waste. So Karanambu purchases such items in bulk and provides them for use in reusable dispensers.*

## 10. We share our local and scientific knowledge with our guests, colleagues and communities

**Sharing our personal understanding of environment, biodiversity, culture and conservation will add to the quality and interest of the tour. Expressing genuine passion encourages our guests to connect and learn. Here are some ideas:**

### ***Invest time at the sites***

Observe, listen and learn about the sites being visited. Each location and species has its own rhythms and habits. When we learn these, we have a better chance of a stress-free visit for guides, guests and wildlife.

### ***Be enthusiastic about wildlife and biodiversity***

Tell the guests about the importance of habitat for wildlife and link this to wider conservation issues. How fascinating and wonderful are these animals, and how can we learn from them and care for them?

### ***Talk about the variety of wildlife beyond the ones being viewed***

Think about similar species seen elsewhere, cryptic species that are hiding in the habitat, species that interact with the ones that we can see.

### ***Think about the bigger picture***

How does this relate to local and regional conservation efforts? What needs to be done? How does this relate to other countries? **See (Example M) Green Diamond Nature Tours' story.**

### ***Use examples of tracks, marks, scat and other signs***

This provides interest and can be used to educate visitors. Sometimes it can be exciting to be "on the trail" even if the animal is not sighted.

### ***Bring scientific materials and guidebooks into the field or have them in the accommodation or communal areas***

Useful wildlife guidebooks help create curiosity, educate guests and provide interest during quiet times. Bring along local materials showcasing traditional names, stories and Indigenous knowledge to bolster the trip.

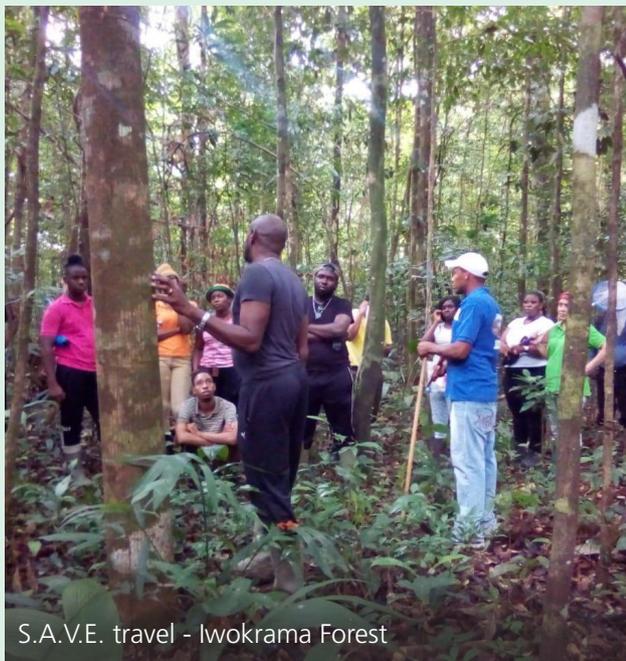


Giant river otter eating fish

©Quedad de Freitas/FAO

# Example M: Green Diamond Nature Tours' story

by Kenneth Butler



S.A.V.E. travel - Iwokrama Forest

©Mike Patterson/Iwokrama River Lodge

Green Diamond Nature Tours works with local and international student exchanges in the areas of research, training and employment.

*Here at Green Diamond Nature Tours, we have a unique way of sharing our vast knowledge of science and culture. One of the ways in which we do this is to work directly with universities. Students are grouped or paired with an Indigenous counterpart from the village/community they are visiting to do their research. This helps to promote an exchange of knowledge between the visiting students and the Indigenous counterpart and teaches that each brings learning of equal value to the relationship.*

*For culture, we do the same thing but the information that is being shared is focused on recognizing our traditional practices and showing how we value every living thing around us, especially the nature and the wildlife. This is very important to us as Indigenous people and gives visitors the opportunity to see life through our eyes and to understand our traditional values.*



## 11. We contribute to conservation, research and education

**In the Rupununi, tourism has grown up alongside research and conservation, and it is one of the biggest draws to the region. Guests love to know that the places they are staying and the people they work with are making real contributions to conservation, scientific knowledge and local education. Here are some ideas:**

### ***Link tourism activities to conservation actions where possible***

Let visitors join in a project, observe conservation or research in action or make a donation to a local group.

**See (Example N) Iwokrama's story: Conservation leadership in action.**

### ***Think of all wildlife interactions as research***

Record observations and ask guests to help. Keep these for future reference, or share them with a local or national conservation group.

### ***Involve local children***

Invite young people to be part of tourism, conservation and research. Try to involve the school, wildlife club or local youth group.

### ***Be proactive!***

Making detailed observations about species and habitats means that it will be easier to notice changes before anyone else. Report to the local wildlife group, or better yet, join one or create a needed conservation initiative!

### ***Include research in an interpretive programme***

Talk to local experts, make new observations and share with the guests. Use scientific and traditional knowledge to inform how, when and where to look for wildlife.

### ***Report interesting finds***

Local people and those involved in research will be interested to hear about unusual species, or animals acting in unusual ways. Share the correspondence with guests to allow them to feel part of "new discoveries."

### ***Report examples of poor animal welfare, death or habit destruction***

Report to the local wildlife officer in Lethem, or the GWCMC (wildlifemanagementauthority@gmail.com). Local wildlife or conservation groups and the appropriate villages or district councils will want to know as well.



©Mike Patterson/Iwokrama River Lodge

# Example N: Iwokrama's story: Conservation leadership in action

by Raquel Thomas-Cesar



Iwokrama International Centre

© Luke Mckenzie

Over 30 years ago, the Government of Guyana offered 371 000 ha of intact rainforest to the Commonwealth community to research models of sustainable use of this particular type of ecosystem. In 1996, the Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) for Rainforest Conservation and Development was established, becoming the second protected area in Guyana. Raquel Thomas-Cesar talks about education tourism as one of the methods Iwokrama uses to advance and impact conservation.

*Education tourism is for all ages but one of the best ways to impact conservation is to engage youth in ways that can have long-lasting impacts.*

*Recently, Guyana has been working to enhance S.A.V.E. (Scientific, Academic, Volunteer, Educational) tourism and Iwokrama has been in the forefront for many years. S.A.V.E. tourism, not a huge profit earner, continues to be an important aspect of perpetuating meaningful conservation efforts, as well as fitting Iwokrama's long-term vision.*

*Iwokrama has a strong foundation of scientific work that is intertwined with traditional ecological knowledge. This sets the stage for novel approaches to key issues, including biodiversity conservation, climate change and REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) issues, forest management*

*governance structures and business development models, including sustainable tourism and forestry.*

*For over two decades, Iwokrama has had training and research programmes and is currently in the third phase of its strategic science programme. All these activities offer students and researchers opportunities to test new models, review impacts of Iwokrama's work in a forest and find spaces for novel research. For example, in the past ten years six species new to science have been discovered.*

*Iwokrama has long-term partnerships for research expeditions, university visits and high school visits, international and local.*

*One example is Operation Wallacea (OpWal), a UK-based research organization. OpWal has partnered with Iwokrama and Surama Village to give student volunteers the opportunity to work with international scientists and local community experts. This mainly faunal survey programme is part of Iwokrama's overall long-term monitoring mission. It also caters for four University of Guyana students annually.*

*Students from the University of Guyana and several international universities often come to Iwokrama to learn about our work or conduct field activities. Since 2011, Miami University, via their Earth Expeditions, has been sending students to Iwokrama and Surama. Researchers have a deepening interest in community livelihoods.*

*The capacity building that Iwokrama has provided to hundreds of individuals from all over the world is one of the most impactful outcomes of the Iwokrama programme. Many of our former staff, teachers and trainees are now in local and international leadership positions. These positions can have very significant positive influences on conservation, whether in national agencies, non-governmental organizations, or as leaders of Indigenous villages and local groups.*

## 12. We monitor our impact on the environment to ensure we are contributing to positive change

**In all our interactions with wildlife, it is important to consider our impact on animals and the wider environment and community. Here are some ideas of how to do this:**

### ***Keep a record***

Keep a record of activities, and the abundance and behaviour of wildlife observed over time. This will help assess the impact of any activities in the area.

### ***Track contributions and set goals***

Take note of donations to conservation activities and community contributions. Set targets to ensure that contributions are distributed in a meaningful way across local village economies, research and conservation.

### ***Be on guard for gender bias***

In hiring and training, be aware and ensure not to overlook people because of their gender. Wildlife doesn't care about the gender of our staff.

### ***Don't be afraid to change***

Nothing stays the same! Be prepared to change in response to a negative impact on the environment or change in circumstances. Some practices may build up a negative impact over time as more people become engaged in that behaviour.

### ***Reach out when things go wrong***

Negative impacts are often more easily solved when we reach out to others for help. Remember others in the community are adversely affected by a reduction in wildlife.

### ***Celebrate when things go well***

Not every impact will be negative; allow time to celebrate success! **See (Example O) Ariwa Beach's story.**

For help and more ideas on how to monitor impacts, contact local conservation or wildlife research organizations or clubs. They will be happy to share their data collection methods.



Using local, sustainable products in tourism - Ariwa Beach, Central Rupununi

©Jonathan Joseph

# Example 0: Ariwa Beach's story

by Jonathan Joseph



Ariwa Beach

©Visit Rupununi

Ariwa Beach has been in operation for the past five years. The beach is situated on the Guyana side of the Guyana/Brazil border of the Takutu River

*We operate Ariwa Beach through an agreement with the St. Ignatius Village council. Ariwa offers a beach bar, kitchen and tours at weekends. We offer cocktails, roast fish and boiled tuma to people, mainly from Lethem, who come for day trips. We offer special boat trips on the Takutu River: we go to an area under the Takutu Bridge and then return. Sometimes we might do a cookout and a picnic. We buy the fish we serve from shops in Lethem or from the shops in the community. I like to use leaves to wrap the meals and for presentation – we use lots of local products, such as cassava, plantain and fresh juice. We offer a new tour to show people how bricks are*

*made and fired locally in a sustainable way. I explain that they don't cut wild wood – they talk with farmers and use wood from land clearing or they just cut what they need. It's part of how I include the community in our operations.*

*When we first started, we had problems with garbage, mainly from people who were not involved in tourism. People would visit the site when we were not here and leave their garbage. Some fishers would also sometimes stop here and leave the beach dirty and we would have to clean it. They would leave stuff like tins and plastic packaging. Sometimes people would also come during the night from Lethem and leave glass bottles and other things like that. It used to happen a lot when we first*

*started, but now we work hard and are very strict with people visiting the site. Before, I had to get a tractor to come and take away about two barrels of garbage every weekend – now we don't have so much garbage. I started asking people to take back their garbage or we would ask them to put it in the garbage bags or the barrel, so the place is easier to keep clean.*

*We don't allow people to come and wash their vehicles at the beach. We do not really have people much swimming or bathing with soap here. For the people who want to swim, we have a netted area where they can swim safely and they stay in that area. Or we might do a special swim out to the island and back, but we don't really encourage people to swim in the general area too much.*

*I have noticed when it is dry – that sometimes people come from the Brazil side across to one of the other beaches on the Guyana side and leave a lot of garbage that ends up floating down and dirtying our area. I usually go out with the boat and gather up all that garbage and clean up the*

*area, even though it's not where our business is situated, because it still comes down to where we are.*

*Wildlife in the area has increased in the last three years. We used to have a lot of fishers using nets and taking out turtles, but I started talking to them, asking them to stop doing that in this area. I had to chase one person from the location because he was taking the turtles to get money to buy drugs; I don't mind people taking one or two fish now and again to eat, but he was just selling the animals for drugs. I told him not to do that down here and that I would report him to police and environmental people. Now, there is a big log opposite where we are and most days it's covered with turtles and guests can see them.*

*Sometimes the otters come and the baboons (red howler monkeys) and freshwater dolphins. Even on the land, we are seeing more labba, agouti, porcupines and anteaters. We see them more now since we have been keeping the place clean and have cleared out the drug guys. So, now we have a lot more turtles and the visitors really like it.*



River view from above

©David Mansell-Moullin/FAO

## 13. We bring benefits to our communities and encourage local people to practise wildlife friendly behaviours

Tourism relies on good relationships with communities and ecosystems. Many of the case studies in this document describe how tourism can bring benefits to local communities and how this in turn can ease pressure on wildlife resources through education and employment.

Here are some more examples:

### ***Train and employ local people***

Support local villages and communities by using local guides, cooks, cleaners, managers and other staff. Make sure there are opportunities for them to access further training and improved employment opportunities.

### ***Spend cash in the community***

Bring benefits to other community members by paying for local services (e.g. meals, gas, crafts in the village). This can be a vital input into the village's economy. Are there any other local shops or services we as tour operators and guests can support? **See (Example P) Rupertee Culture Group's story** for one such example.

### ***Share photos and experiences***

Follow up after a visit by sharing photos with the group, even photos of animals looked for but not found this time. Perhaps also share photos with villagers, conservation/research groups and other tour operators.

### ***Use guides, accommodation, transport and food/ drinks providers that are wildlife friendly***

We should let our service providers know what our standards are and avoid working with those we know are using wildlife irresponsibly. If they cannot change their habits, then we can find another wildlife friendly partner.

### ***Set a high standard***

Our best practices are the standard for others to follow.



©Rupununi Christmas Fair

# Example P: Rupertee Culture Group's story

by Gloria Durante



Macushi members of Rupertee Culture Group, North Rupununi

©Gloria Durante

The Rupertee Culture Group was set up in 2010 by Gloria Durante. Read more to find out how the group has found success:

*At that time, I was working with the Wildlife Club, with the children from our community – it was so important at that time for the children to know the importance of wildlife and what was meant by looking out for our wildlife. We used to take them out to see the animals and birds and, from that, it progressed to also including the traditional songs and dances.*

*When I started the culture performances not everyone wanted to participate. Most of the children were too shy and so I had to work with bigger kids. I had to find people who were not so shy, but it was hard because not many were interested.*

*At that time, I was also managing the Craft Centre – the two activities were connected – so when tourists came, we would perform the traditional dances for them, then take them to the craft centre to show them crafts and explain to them how they were made and how they were used in Macushi culture.*

*When we started, people did not think what we were doing was very important and it was only a few of us, three girls and three boys. But when they saw the tourists coming and saw that they were interested in the culture – in seeing target shooting and fire lighting – more people, such as older crafters, became involved. People started to feel prouder of their culture. Now, even though some of the original members have moved on in their lives, we have 14 members and people are always ready to join. Before the pandemic, we were performing multiple times every month for tourists, who would come either from Rock View or Iwokrama. Through tourism, people started to see they were able to earn a bit of income from the performances and the parents were glad to see their children performing the traditional dances and keeping the culture alive. Through the group, we also encourage people to advance their studies. Even those who don't speak too much Macushi want to learn the traditional ways and how to say the national pledge in Macushi. They are not so shy anymore and they are proud to see their culture being preserved. This encourages me to keep doing the culture group and working with the young people.*

A photograph of a sloth sitting on a tree branch, surrounded by green leaves. The sloth has brown fur and a long, dark snout. The background is a clear blue sky. On the left side of the image, there are several concentric, curved lines in green, yellow, and orange, resembling a stylized graphic element.

# Part IV: Links to wildlife and tourism institutions in Guyana

Check out these links for more information.

Visit Rupununi (VR)  
www.visitrupununi.com  
WhatsApp 592- 630-7753

Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA)	<a href="http://www.guyanatourism.com">www.guyanatourism.com</a>
Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission (GWCMC)	<a href="http://www.wildlife.gov.gy">www.wildlife.gov.gy</a>
Fisheries Department	<a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.gy/fisheries">www.agriculture.gov.gy/fisheries</a>
Protected Areas Commission (PAC)	
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	<a href="http://www.epaguyana.org">www.epaguyana.org</a>
North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB)	<a href="http://www.nrddb.org">www.nrddb.org</a>
South Rupununi District Council (SRDC)	<a href="http://wapichanao.communitylands.org/">http://wapichanao.communitylands.org/</a>
Kanuku Mountain Community Representative Group (KMCRG)	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/kmcrg">www.facebook.com/kmcrg</a>
South Rupununi Conservation Society (SRCS)	<a href="http://www.srcs-gy.com">www.srcs-gy.com</a>

### **Other places to get advice and info:**

Tourism committees and village councils

Some villages in the Rupununi (e.g. Wowetta, Surama, Sand Creek, Karasabai) have established a Tourism Committee that manages community-based tourism at the village level, in close relationship with the village council. They are generally composed of a board of five people (chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, secretary and assistant) and members representing different tourism-related groups (tour guides, bird guides, culture, crafts, youth, agroprocessing, catering, accommodation, etc.). The Tourism Committee oversees developing the local tourism strategy and policy, and its action plan or tourism master plan. It defines the tourism products to be developed and sets rules and regulations, in terms of sustainable natural resources and environmental management, conservation of cultural heritage, as well as carrying capacity.

To report issues to GWCMC, call  
223 0940; 223-0939; 646-1229

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Indigenous man painting

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