



March 2016
Newsletter



SOUTH RUPUNUNI CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Bird-Friendly Coffee

Bird, Tree, and Landscape Conservation

SRCS EXEC. TEAM

Nicholas Fredericks, PRESIDENT
Leroy Ignacio, VICE PRESIDENT
Kayla de Freitas, TREASURER
Erin Earl, SECRETARY
Asaph Wilson, BIRD SPECIALIST
Chung Liu, PROJECT MANAGER

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

The SRCS would like to thank Sand Creek and Shulinab for permission and support for Rangers to conduct school visits and field visits this month. We also thank the Rangers and all participants for their continued hard work and dedication towards our ongoing Red Siskin research!

SRCS PARTICIPANTS

SAND CREEK FIELD/SCHOOL VISIT

Rgr. Nicholas Cyril, KATOONARIB
Rgr. Maxi Ignace, SHULINAB
Rgr. Eion Gray, SHULINAB
Rgr. Leon Baird, DADANAWA
Cdt. Dean Jackman, SAND CREEK
Cdt. Terrence Augustin, SHULINAB
Cdt. Kim Spencer, KATOONARIB

SHULINAB FIELD/SCHOOL VISIT

B.S. Asaph Wilson, SHULINAB
Rgr. Maxi Ignace, SHULINAB
Rgr. Eion Gray, SHULINAB
Rgr. Nicholas Cyril, KATOONARIB
Cdt. Terrence Augustin, SHULINAB

ANNOUNCING A NEW PROJECT!

We are proud to announce that the SRCS has begun a new project, funded by a generous grant from the Rufford Foundation, to investigate the potential for growing coffee and cacao under the conservation-friendly criteria for Bird-Friendly Coffee® set forth by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. Our initial pilot project will involve four communities - Katoonarib, Rupunau, Sawariwau, and Shulinab - and has now also received permission from the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and EPA Guyana to commence. The project will utilise SMBC Bird-Friendly Coffee® criteria to research where and how shade-grown coffee and cacao can be used to reduce deforestation, protect standing forest, and provide potential economic benefits for conservation. The project will also aim to plant a range of useful indigenous tree species - these trees will eventually provide shade cover for coffee and cacao, and will also produce a variety of other non-timber forest products that can also bring potential economic benefits to farmers and communities. We hope that this investigation is the first step towards a long-term engagement in bringing conservation benefits to the peoples and communities of the South Rupununi.



Top: (1) Rain! The four-letter word that nobody dares to mention but everybody is hoping for. This year was one of the driest in recorded history, and we can only pray that the rainy season will end this long drought. *Bottom:* (2) SMBC Bird-Friendly Coffee® criteria will be used to guide the SRCS in planting coffee and cacao under the most ecologically-friendly and organic conditions possible. While it may be a long time before any certification can take place - coffee takes around 4-5 years to start bearing - we intend to start as best we can, here and now. (3) The Rufford Foundation is a UK-based organisation that funds many different conservation projects around the world - a big thank you to the Foundation for supporting the SRCS in our new work! (4) An illustration of the stem, leaf, and berry of coffee. Photo from www.wikipedia.org.



THE RESEARCH PROCESS



Left column, from top to bottom: Both (1) coffee, pictured here with berries still green, and (2) cacao - the raw ingredient for chocolate, unfortunately with no fruit in this photo - are not only valuable agricultural products but are also tropical plants that can grow well under the shade of larger trees. The canopy of shade trees protects coffee and cacao from excessive sunlight, and also provides different fruits and flowers throughout the year, which attracts insects and thus provides food and safe habitat for different bird species. As cash crops, the planting of coffee and cacao offer economic benefits to local communities for keeping standing forest, and conservation benefits for birds. (3) Here, the SRCS will investigate whether and where coffee and cacao can be grown - for example, to address existing concerns about bush island preservation, and stimulating growth of secondary forest in old farm areas and along the savannah-bush edge.

Right column, from top to bottom: The project involves not only coffee and cacao, but also the planting of important indigenous and fruit trees. (4) Here, Ranger Nicholas Cyril sorts various seeds including copahiba (Piniaokan), tamarind, and whitee. (5) Nicholas, assisted here by his daughter Lucia, then plants the seeds in black bags so they can be kept safe until sprouting and eventual transplant. (6) One of the first copahiba seedlings to sprout! One of our main objectives is not only to better document our indigenous trees and their uses, but also to learn about when which seeds are available to collect, and how to best germinate and transplant them for successful future reforestation.



BIRDS OF THE RUPUNUNI

This section features photos and a short description of bird species found in the Rupununi taken by SRCS members during routine field activities, while guiding for bird-watching expeditions, and all sorts of other opportunities. This Newsletter includes the White-tailed Trogon, the X, and the Swallow-Winged Puffbird.

From left to right: (1) The **White-Tailed Trogon (Korokorobau)** is a forest bird that can be found in the canopy feeding on fruits, insects, and small animals. As with all trogons, it is an arboreal bird - perching only on branches as it is unable to walk on the ground. It can be found in both primary and secondary forest. (2) The **Plumbeous Seedeater (Dio)** is one of several birds known as Dio in Wapishana - a name that describes several other local seedeaters and seed-finches. It can be found on open savannahs, often travelling with other similar bird species. Like most of its family, males are very lively singers. (3) The **Swallow-Winged Puffbird (Chipip)** is a small and nimble bird found in forest, as well as more open areas. It is commonly seen perching on branches, and flying out to take insects. It is particularly fond of termites or ants, and can be spotted hovering above swarms as it feeds.



Note: The endangered Red Siskin (*Sporagra cucullata*) is officially protected by the South Rupununi Conservation Society. The SRCS is currently researching its ranges in the South Rupununi, to be included as a proposed Important Birding Area (IBA). The South Rupununi Conservation Society is based at Dadanawa Ranch, South Rupununi, Region 9, Guyana. Contact via radio at 4-0 on 7900 or 5300, phone Kayla (+592) 668 8562 and Erin (+592) 680 8102, or email Erin (earl.erin@gmail.com) and Kayla (epiona04@yahoo.ca).