



## Protect Ancient Wetlands in Guyana's "Land of the Giants"

The Rupununi region in southwestern Guyana is a 17.2 million-acre highly intact and geologically ancient landscape of forests, low mountains, tropical savannas and floodplains named for the Rupununi River that flows through it. During the annual flood season, Rupununi waters combine with those of the giant Amazon and Essequibo rivers to form the largest wetland in Guyana and one of the most exceptionally biodiverse regions in the world.

Indigenous Peoples have been living sustainably on remote territories in the Rupununi for centuries, but these territories and the biodiversity they shelter are at risk. There is immense pressure from commercial and illegal logging and mining enterprises and large-scale agriculture, which threatens natural water systems, fish migration and spawning, and the movement of wildlife across the savanna.

Rainforest Trust and our partner, Conservation International Guyana, seek \$1,993,021 to support the establishment of 741,000 acres of Indigenous Community Conservation Areas (ICCAs), which are territories and areas that are conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

### PROTECT A FLOODED WORLD RICH WITH SPECIES

The giant inland water system that emerges in Rupununi each year creates 750 lakes, ponds and seasonally flooded depressions. It supports the world's greatest diversity of freshwater fish, with over 450 fish species, along with river-dwelling populations of the Endangered Amazon River Dolphin and Amazonian Manatee.

The mingling waters allow for the mass migration of fish-life across the savanna, a complex phenomenon that is still being studied by scientists. This great abundance of fish supports healthy populations of Black Caiman, Giant River Otter, Giant South American Turtle, and recovering populations of the largest freshwater fish in the world, the Arapaima—which is why the Rupununi is sometimes referred to as the "Land of the Giants."

Low mountains covered by old-growth forests with exposed rock faces and outcrops provide habitat for Harpy Eagle, Jaguar, Guiana Spider Monkeys and Lowland Tapir. Biologically unique woodland patches known as "bush islands" host small populations of forest animals in the savanna.

Threatened and extremely range-restricted bird species here include the Critically Endangered Hoary-Throated Spinetail and Rio Branco Antbird, and the Endangered Sun Parakeet.



**741,000**  
ACRES

**\$1,993,021**  
PROJECT COST

**\$2.69**  
COST PER ACRE

**108,385,492** mT  
CO<sub>2</sub> EQUIVALENTS  
STORED

### KEY SPECIES:

Hoary-Throated Spinetail (CR),  
Rio Branco Antbird (CR),  
Sun Parakeet (EN)



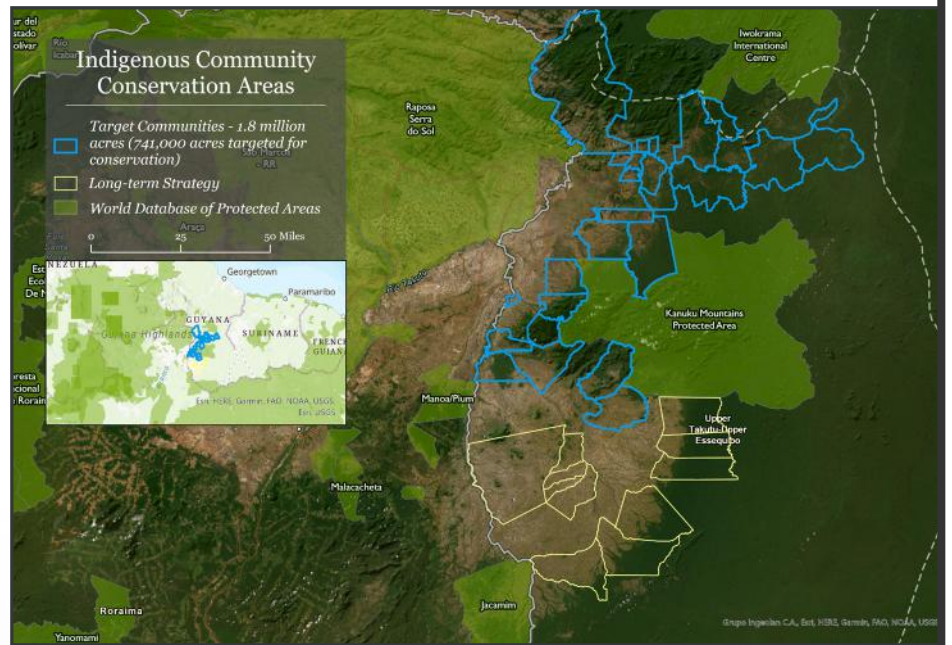
Rupununi Wetlands linking Amazon and Guiana Shield, Bush Islands © Conservation International

The newly conserved areas will fortify an important conservation corridor in Southern Guyana between Iwokrama International Centre (918,244 acres) to the north and Kanuku Mountains Protected Area (1.5 million acres) at the center of the project, where the Rupununi river originates, and an important buffer zone will be created around Kanuku, where the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples is critical to continued conservation.

## SUPPORT INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO PROTECT NATURE-BASED LIVELIHOODS

Communities here depend heavily on fish as a main source of protein in their diet and on nature-based resources for their survival and well-being. **They actively seek to protect their intact lands and waters from growing threats.**

Customary laws and other effective means will be employed to create areas for sustainable resource use and areas strictly set aside for conservation. Commercial, extractive activities (including gold mining, industrial logging, and large-scale hunting/fishing) will not be permitted within the proposed ICCAs. In this way, Indigenous communities will be supported to protect and manage their legally owned territories in this extraordinary region of rainforests, savannas, and floodplains.



Rupununi Bush Island Corridor © Conservation International

