



“Pristine”, “untouched” and “undisturbed” are just few of the words that are used to describe Guyana’s rainforest. With 80% of its 216 000 square kilometers covered with lush, virgin rainforest, it comes as no surprise that Guyana is home to over 800 species of birds, 6000 species of plants, 700 species of fish and 200 species of mammals.

Explore this little known South American country that sits on the Guiana Shield – one of only four relatively unharmed tropical forests left in the world – and observe the following giants in their natural habitat.

Jaguar - South America’s largest cat

Giant River Otter - the world’s largest and rarest otter

Harpy Eagle - South America’s largest eagle and world’s most powerful raptor

Arapaima - the world’s largest freshwater fish

Giant Anteater - the world’s largest anteater

False Vampire Bat - largest bat in Central and South America

Capybara - the world’s largest rodent

Green Anaconda - the world’s largest snake

Black Caiman - world’s largest of subfamily Alligatorinae (alligators and caimans)

Giant South American River Turtle - world’s largest freshwater turtle

Victoria Amazonica Lily - the world’s largest lily

*“Guyana is South America’s biggest little secret”
- BBC Wildlife Magazine*

Jaguar - King of the Jungle

The rare and elusive Jaguar is probably the most famous animal in South America and is considered to be the largest cat and top terrestrial predator on this continent.

Residents to both forests and savannahs, Jaguars are excellent swimmers and fishermen. They are one of the few cats that regularly go into the water and can easily swim the mighty Essequibo River. According to the Audubon Magazine, the Iwokrama Forest “may be the best place in the world to see a wild jaguar”.

The Jaguar is listed as Appendix I by the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) – threatened with extinction.



Panthera onca

Arapaima - World’s largest freshwater fish

In Guyana, Arapaimas are found mainly in the Essequibo and Rupununi Rivers as well as the Amazon River Basin. They can be seen in large numbers in isolated ponds during the dry season from September through March.

Arapaimas eat other fishes and are top freshwater predators. As such, this fish is important in regulating the populations of other fish species in rivers and wetlands.

The Arapaima is listed as Appendix II by the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) – trade in the animal must be controlled.



Arapaima gigas



Harpia harpyja

Harpy Eagle – Powerful and Majestic

The Harpy Eagle is the largest eagle in the South America and one of the largest and most powerful birds of prey in the world. They are more often seen in the Kanuku and Iwokrama Mountains.

Harpy eagle populations in Guyana are healthy because of the vast expanses of untouched tropical forests that they use as hunting grounds.

The Harpy Eagle is listed as Appendix I by the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) – threatened with extinction.

Giant Anteater - World’s largest anteater

With tiny eyes and ears that greatly contrast its large snout, body and tail, the world’s largest anteater is truly an extraordinary animal to see.

Giant Anteaters are found in Iwokrama Forest and the Rupununi Savannahs.

The Giant Anteater is listed as Appendix II by the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) - trade in animal must be controlled.



Myrmecophaga tridactyla



Pteronura brasiliensis

Giant River Otter - World's largest and rarest otter

Of the more than a dozen otter species in the world, the Giant River Otter is the largest and rarest. It only lives in South America, and is only one of two otters recorded in the Iwokrama Forest.

They are only found in the more remote waterways of the Guianas such as the Rupununi, Essequibo, Abary and Mazaruni Rivers (as well as the Amazon Basin).

Guyana's Giant River Otters were first documented at the Karanambo Ranch in the North Rupununi in 1988. A stable population has been present in the area since then and has been chronicled through the Giant River Otter rehabilitation work of Diane McTurk at Karanambo Ranch.

The Giant River Otter is listed as Appendix I by the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) – threatened with extinction.



Melanosuchus niger

World's largest of Subfamily Alligatorinae (alligators and caimans).

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Images courtesy of FotoNatura

Giants of Guyana

