Evidence of breeding by Guianan Cock-of-the-rock *Rupicola rupicola* near Tebu Top, southern Suriname

Key evidence: five recently used nests on one rock formation; feathers, droppings and fruit remains; females and juvenile males nearby; one juvenile flying from the nest site; no lek found despite targeted searches.

Abstract

We report evidence of breeding by Guianan Cock-of-the-rock *Rupicola rupicola* near Tebu Top, a granitic inselberg in the Wayana region of southern Suriname. Observations were made between 13 and 18 April 2026 and include five nests on a solitary rock formation in adjacent lowland tropical forest. The nests were empty at the time of observation but showed signs of recent use, including feathers collected from the nests, and droppings and fruit remains below them. Females and juvenile males were observed nearby, and one juvenile flew from the nest site when observers passed. To our knowledge, based on available literature and accessible records, this represents the first documented breeding record of *R. rupicola* in the Wayana region and in southern Suriname.

Introduction

Guianan Cock-of-the-rock *Rupicola rupicola* is a cotinga associated with humid tropical forest and rocky substrates, where females construct mud-and-plant nests attached to rock faces, ledges or sheltered overhangs. Several nests may occur in close proximity, and nesting sites may be spatially separated from male display grounds. Although the species is known from Suriname, detailed breeding records from the southern interior remain scarce. Large parts of southern Suriname, including remote inselberg systems and surrounding lowland forests, are still ornithologically under-surveyed. Here we document evidence of local breeding near Tebu Top in the Wayana region.

Study area and observations

Observations were made between 13 and 18 April 2026 during an ecological expedition to Tebu Top, in the Wayana region of southern Suriname (3.485882° N, 55.152594° W). Tebu Top is a granitic inselberg surrounded by continuous lowland tropical forest. The nest site was located at the base of the inselberg on a solitary rock formation in forest near stands of açaí palm *Euterpe oleracea*. Five nests were recorded on the same rock: three on the western side and two on the eastern side. All nests were attached to the rock surface at approximately 2.5–4 m above ground level. The nests were empty but appeared recently used. Feathers were collected from the nests, and droppings and fruit remains were present below them. Females and juvenile males were observed in the surrounding forest, and one juvenile flew from the nest site when observers passed. Photographs of the nests, sound recordings and visual observations were obtained. Despite targeted searches over multiple days in the surroundings of the nest site, no lek was found.

Results

The five nests documented on a single rock formation are consistent with the known nesting behaviour of *Rupicola rupicola* on rocky substrates. The presence of feathers, droppings and fruit remains below the nests indicates recent use. The observation of a juvenile flying from the nest site, together with observations of females and juvenile males nearby, supports the interpretation that the rock formation functioned as a breeding site. The fact that all nests were empty in mid-April suggests that breeding had already reached a late or post-nesting stage at the time of observation.

Discussion

These observations provide strong evidence for local breeding of Guianan Cock-of-the-rock near Tebu Top. The combination of multiple nests, recent nest signs, food remains and direct observations of juveniles indicates recently completed breeding rather than incidental presence. To our knowledge, based on available literature and accessible records, this is the first documented evidence of breeding by *R. rupicola* in the Wayana region and likely in southern

Suriname. The record is notable because the nests were already empty in mid-April, whereas published accounts indicate that egg-laying and nesting activity may occur during March and April. This suggests that breeding near Tebu Top may have started relatively early in the season, although further observations are needed to determine whether this reflects local breeding phenology or annual variation. The clustering of nests on a single isolated rock formation highlights the importance of suitable rocky substrate as nesting habitat. The absence of a detected lek does not weaken the interpretation of breeding, as display sites and nesting sites may be spatially separated in this species. These observations underline the ornithological importance of Tebu Top and the need for further surveys of inselberg-associated forests in southern Suriname.

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References

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