

Trinidad & Tobago

Naturetrek Tour Report

12 - 25 April 2008



Cocoi Heron



Bare-eyed Thrush



Copper-rumped Hummingbird



Scarlet Ibis

Report compiled by Paul Dukes
Photographs by Peter Dunn



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Leaders: Paul Dukes (Naturetrek leader)
Jogi Ramlal & Mahase Ramlal (local leaders in Trinidad)
Adolphus James & Gladwyn James (local leaders in Tobago)

Participants: Penny Ladd
Lesley Greaves
Bernard Markwell
Sandra Markwell
Hilary Guy
Eve Ellis
Brian Wright
Mandy Wright
Helen Bell
Keith Youngs
Lynn Youngs

Day 1

Saturday 12th April

Shaking off the soporific effects of a trans-Atlantic flight we passed through arrival formalities at Trinidad's Piarco Airport and emerged into a balmy 25C early evening to be met by a cheery Jogi, Mahase and the Asa Wright crew. Several of the group members were soon deploying binoculars to look at Palm Tanagers and Kiskadees in the sparse trees outside the Terminal, an early indication of an enthusiasm level that remained high throughout the tour! Luggage was quickly stowed in the pick-up and we climbed into Jogi and Mahases mini-buses for the 45 minute drive to the Centre. Saturday night traffic filled the busy dual-carriageway from Piarco to Arima but after negotiating the outskirts of the town we soon began to climb up into the northern range of hills replacing the noise of the streets with the chirping of frogs and crickets in the forest.

At length we reached the world-famous Centre and received a welcome rum-punch to revive spirits as the manager handed out our room numbers, albeit temporarily losing our attention as a huge Caligo Butterfly flapped through the reception area. Bags were conveyed to the appropriate locations, followed by the occupants of the rooms then, after the opportunity of a quick wash, we reassembled in the dining hall for a buffet dinner. Although still only mid-evening body-clocks were telling us that it was well after midnight GMT and we retired early, but not before making plans for an exciting day around the Centre beginning with the dawn entertainment from the verandah.

Day 2

Sunday 13th April

The night serenade of crickets and cicadas suddenly ceased at about 0530 as the first whistles and squeaks of the birds began and by 0600 the birds were in full voice, House Wren and tanagers leading the dawn chorus. Overnight rain had seemed heavy on occasions and persisted through the morning but far from inhibiting bird behaviour it seemed to act as a catalyst for a joyful celebration of the downpour among many of the species. I made my way on to the verandah at 0545 but was soon followed by other AWC guests as we assembled for the morning performance. It was comforting to note that the two hot drink urns were already bubbling nicely and fresh brewed coffee helped the waking up process.

As first arrival I removed the screens, permitting the impatient Palm Tanagers which nest inside the verandah to escape from their overnight confinement and join their relatives for breakfast.

Turning attention to the freshly replenished bird tables and hummingbird feeders we found an ever increasing horde of avian arrivals heralding another 12 hours of veranda entertainment. Many years of visiting Trinidad have not blunted the sense of excitement and anticipation that I felt, sitting with my cup of coffee watching the forest wake up. First on parade were the immaculate, but pugnacious, White-necked Jacobins, ready to see off intruders from the moment they began sipping the morning sugar solution. Palm Tanagers were soon feasting on the fruit and bread, quickly joined by their White-lined and Silver-beaked brethren, Cocoa & Bare-eyed Thrushes, Crested Oropendolas and Shiny Cowbirds. Swarms of tiny Bananaquits quickly dominated activities around the hummingbird feeders, competing with the jacobins, and White-chested Emeralds for the 'nectar' whilst Black-throated Mango and Copper-rumped Hummingbirds explored the choice of flowers in the garden. Almost imperceptibly, the late rising honeycreepers arrived and all at once the Bananaquits found their perches filled by a flood of purple and green bodies. These brightly coloured little birds rapidly asserted their presence so that on occasions every port on the feeders was occupied by either a Purple or a Green Honeycreeper with dozens more scrabbling to take over a position.

7am and it was a riot of activity in front of the veranda. Kiskadee Flycatchers shouted their names, a House Wren poured out his song from the undergrowth, Grey-fronted Doves bustled along the path below the tables and Blue-Grey Tanagers jostled with the other birds for the rapidly dwindling supplies of fruit. Rather more distantly, several Channel-billed Toucans posed for telescope views as they perched in the tree-tops and Orange-winged Parrots screeched their way across the valley.

The ringing of a bell summoned us to our own breakfasts in the dining hall but we were anxious not to miss any of the action and were soon installed again for another hour or two on the veranda. Red-rumped Agoutis nervously emerged from the vegetation to scavenge beneath the tables, sharing their spoil with Ruddy Ground Doves. An exotic Blue-crowned Motmot made occasional visits to the table but rarely remained long before melting back into the forest. A Tropical Kingbird sailed after insects from bush-top perches and a Greyish Saltator added his rather sweet if repetitive song to the morning chorus. Another contributor was a noisy but secretive singing Long-billed Gnat-Wren which followed a circuit around the bushes but rarely showed itself for more than a few moments. Several tiny Tufted Coquettes buzzed like insects from flower to flower bringing the hummingbird tally to nine species as individual Green, Little and Rufous-breasted Hermits had all paid brief visits.

Other species seen during the morning included Golden-Olive Woodpecker, Violaceous Trogon, Yellow Oriole, Black-tailed Tityra, Streaked Flycatchers and one or two Piratic Flycatchers giving the Crested Oropendolas a hard time as they attempted to return to their huge pendulous nests. Despite being much smaller than the rightful owners of the nests, the flycatchers are adept at appropriating nests for their own use and are invariably found near colonies of Oropendolas and Caciques subjecting their victims to furious attacks whenever they returned. Closer to the verandah, a superb Red-legged Honeycreeper joined his relatives at the feeders and arguably won the prize as the most beautiful of all the multi-coloured throng. A drab Forest Elaenia certainly provided no competition in this respect and a pair of Great Ant-Shrikes was striking rather than gaudy.

When the frenzied activity around the feeders abated slightly as the food was consumed and we seized the opportunity to go for a leg-stretch along the entrance road to the Centre but the rain returned to dampen our spirits and we saw very little apart from several Common Black Hawks soaring overhead and a feeding party of Bay-headed and Turquoise Tanagers.

Author of the new field guide to Trinidad, and occasional Naturetrek leader, Martyn Kenefick had joined us for lunch with his wife Petra and after the meal he joined us for a walk along the Discovery Trail which in bygone days was the principal highway down to Arima. Martyn's sharp eyes and hearing found us a White-tailed Trogon in the trees and a Fer de Lance at our feet which elicited the memorable warning that 'it may be small but it can kill you!' The young snake fortunately had no such intention and we left it in peace while we went to view a Golden-headed Manakin lek which was in full swing as we stood watching inside the forest.

Finding their relatives, the White-bearded Manakin does not require any subtle field skills, you simply follow the clicking noises of the displaying birds until you reach a sign proclaiming 'White-bearded Manakin lek' and there they are, funny little blue and white bundles of feathers jumping up and down in an insane manner on the forest floor! There were not too many birds in attendance today but those present were as entertaining as ever.

The loudest sound of the forest is made by the Bearded Bellbirds which compete with each other in an area helpfully indicated by a large information board although in truth one would have to be profoundly deaf not to be aware that this is where the birds have their 'song' perches. The volume of each call is almost painfully loud, especially when the bird is perched overhead but paradoxically it is no easy task to see the source of the din. Lynn and Keith popped down to try their luck earlier in the day and were rewarded with good views of one male although a number of others were present and their explosive trumpeting calls resonated over the forest for most of the day, being clearly audible back at the AWC.

After our brief exploration of the Discovery and Chaconia trails we made our way back to the verandah for afternoon cakes and refreshments followed by a further session of scanning the bushes. New avian sightings included a mobile Rufous-browed Peppershrike whilst a captive Machette Snake was our second snake of the day, this one rather more inoffensive than the Fer de Lance. It had been caught in the grounds and was displayed to visitors before being released in a quiet area.

Gradually dusk settled over the grounds and it was rum punch time soon followed by the serving of our evening meal. Rainy or not it had been an absorbing day and we all retired to our rooms with heads filled with images of the brightly coloured tropical birds we had seen. Just to emphasise the point the post dinner entertainment was a video film portraying the Island's birds.

Day 3

Monday 14th April

There was still a cloudy and damp aspect to the Arima Valley at first light but this did not deter the tanagers and hummingbirds which soon began their daily routine as the bird tables were replenished. On this second morning session the group members were confidently identifying most of the regular visitors but sometimes the darting hummingbirds or rugby-scrum of honeycreepers still caused a few furrowed brows.

Telescope views of more distant Channel-billed Toucans, Black-tailed Tityra and a ‘trumpeting’ Bearded Bellbird added to the variety whilst numbers of Grey-rumped Swifts swooped over the trees, sometimes accompanied by a Band-rumped or two. The highlight was probably the lovely female Collared Trogon which chose to perch briefly on a branch, just metres from the verandah! Lynn and Helen opted for an early look along the Discovery trail and were rewarded with Chestnut Woodpecker and Plain Brown Woodcreeper for their effort.

After breakfast we set off for a day on the north coast travelling in two minibuses, one driven by Jogi and the other by his keen-eyed son Mahase. The route followed the usual pattern for this excursion, a gradual climb through the Northern Range forests, stopping from time to time for roadside birding, a descent into the coastal plains bordering the Caribbean, and lunch near the little town of Blanchisseuse. After the dull start to the day the weather slowly improved although varying degrees of cloud persisted around the hills and it remained windy. The birding was slow but with the aid of Jogie’s Ferruginous Pygmy Owl calls and the use of a tape we did see a few of the forest inhabitants during our stops.

A pair of Boat-billed Flycatchers was one of the first roadside finds followed by views of White-tailed Trogons and a surprise Grey-throated Leaf-tosser picked up on call by Mahase then seen clinging to the trunk of a tree in a bizarre fit of woodcreeper behaviour. Other sightings included Golden-fronted Greenlets, Plumbeous Kite and a dozen or so Common Black Hawks. We spent some time around the highest point of the road at Morne Bleu but couldn’t find the pair of Swallow Tanagers seen a few days earlier. Some of the group did manage to glimpse one or two of the elusive Speckled Tanagers near the summit and a White-collared Swift dashed across the sky. Although we missed the Swallow Tanagers here, a fortuitous stop to telescope a distant flock of Blue-headed Parrots did lead to our only encounter with this attractive migrant tanager, a lovely male perched characteristically like a flycatcher on an exposed branch.

We continued on to the coast, once again stopping from time and encountering increasing numbers of Black and Turkey Vultures as we neared the Caribbean. Arriving at the coast we found that Blanchisseuse was looking rather deserted but pulled into the usual beach-side car park where Jogi and Mahase set out the picnic lunch, a typically tasty Asa Wright chicken pilau with salad and fruit. We ate our lunches with Carib Grackles watching intently for any scraps and numerous vultures soaring overhead. Brown Pelicans were loafing offshore and quite a few Frigates glided menacingly along the coast whilst Short-tailed Swifts arrowed over the top of the wind-swept palms as further entertainment. A short walk down to a nearby river introduced some new birds with six or more summer plumage Spotted Sandpipers, White-winged and Rough-wing Swallows along with Grey-breasted Martins and Short-tailed Swifts.

After packing away the lunch debris we returned to this river and drove a little further inland where a few mangroves still remain. Birding was however suspended for a while as we watched the entertainment of a lorry crossing a narrow bridge over the stream with a man walking ahead of the vehicle testing each bolt of the structure by hitting it with a mallet. Prior to this noisy interlude a Green Kingfisher was seen beside the water and a Little Hermit made a brief appearance. Not far from this epic crossing of the bridge Jogi tried playing a tape of Silvered Antbird and within minutes two of this dumpy little mangrove dwellers appeared amid a tangle of roots in the marsh and we were treated to very nice views as they sang back at the mystery intruder in their territory.

The return drive to the Asa Wright was fairly unproductive until a stop for afternoon cakes and a leg-stretch at the usual Blue-headed Parrot site enabled us to watch Yellow-rumped Caciques fussing around their colony and a mixture of small birds. Orange-winged Parrots were raucously in evidence and much to our delight a smaller Blue-headed Parrot soon dropped into open view at the top of a bare tree and we were able to enjoy superb 60X telescope views.

In no time at all after reaching Monte Bleu we descended through the forest to reach the AWC in good time for the 6 o'clock serving of rum punches. An excellent day had seen the addition of quite a few bird species to our holiday list and a chance to write on postcards that we had lunched beside the blue waters of the Caribbean!

Day 4

Tuesday 15th April

A day of great variety began in traditional manner with coffee and tea at 6am on the veranda but soon after we left the building to take an early walk along the Chaconia Trail in search of Black-faced Ant-thrush, a denizen of the forest floor which often occurs along this trail. My dodgy impressions of the bird's call may or may not have attracted one to begin calling from amid the leaf debris of the forest floor but I suspect it was responding more to another in the distance. Whatever the explanation the ant-thrush strolled briskly around in characteristic fashion calling every few minutes and eventually sat on a log for many minutes giving excellent views. A short distance along the trail we saw another calling bird which made the whole exercise seem much easier than I dared hope for.

On the way back to breakfast we found the manakins in full display mode, saw a White-necked Thrush, a pair of Blue Dacnis in a tree beside the Discovery Trail and a Northern Waterthrush tripping wagtail-like along the path. During our absence from the verandah a White Hawk has sailed across the valley and the usual mix of passerines had provided plenty of entertainment for those who had not joined our ant-thrush foray.

Nariva Swamp was our objective for the day, but before reaching Arima we stopped to telescope a Ferruginous Pygmy Owl which Mahase had staked out on his way to the Centre. The calls of this fierce little owl had been a regular sound in the early hours each night at AWC but this was our first opportunity to see the bird responsible. The owl was perched on a low branch of a pine tree and offered excellent views from the roadside, occasionally fixing us with a baleful stare as if telling us to hurry up and leave it in peace. Inevitably any stop in the Arima Valley soon produces more bird sightings and during our short time owl watching, one or two Swallow-tailed Kites appeared over a distant ridge and a White Hawk appeared in the same area.

We eventually reached the dry savannah grasslands at Wallerfield and turned into the Agricultural Research Station to sample the range of new birds in this change of habitat. These came in quick succession as we left the vehicles and wandered a short distance along a farm road bisecting large overgrown fields dotted with occasional tall trees and shelters for the cattle which were grazing in some of the paddocks. As usual, the multiple appearances of new species made it difficult for tour members to know which way to look first as fresh names were called out but eventually everyone managed to get satisfactory views of all the Research Station residents. Primrose winged Wattled Jacanas were among the first additions followed by noisy Southern Lapwings, White-winged Swallows flying around our heads, flocks of Cattle Egrets stalking around the livestock and some rather mobile Green-rumped Parrotlets. Flycatching Tropical Kingbirds were numerous and other birds taking their toll of the insects included a number of dapper White-headed Marsh Tyrants and several Pied Water Tyrants.

At least one Grey Kingbird was using the telephone wires as a flycatching perch but even more exciting was a loose flock of Fork-tailed Flycatchers adorning fences and bushes in the field beside the entrance road. These migrants had not been present when Mahase visited a few days earlier and I strongly suspect they were fresh overnight arrivals as the two or three birds first noted as we stopped quickly increased to ten or a dozen as if they were filtering in from the surrounding area. These really are elegant and beautiful birds which we appreciated in full as they perched boldly just 50 metres away. Before the distraction of the flycatchers we had been watching an adult Cocoli Heron fishing along a creek in the same field but it was some minutes before our attention returned to this handsome bird which by then shared the field of view with three or four Fork-tailed Flycatchers! A pair of Yellow Orioles was almost overlooked with all the excitement of the flycatchers and a small Spectacled Caiman in one of the first pools wisely sank below the water before it attracted attention!

Small parties of Grassland Yellow Finches roamed the weedy fields looking rather canary like as they perched on seed heads and with them we found two or three of the very local Ruddy-breasted Seed-Eaters, although these were quite flighty and proved difficult to telescope. More obliging residents were the smart Red-breasted Blackbirds flaunting their scarlet chests in display. Overhead literally hundreds of Black Vultures were drifting and spiralling in the morning thermals accompanied by a few Turkey Vultures, whilst several Savannah Hawks observed us from tree-top perches. The margins of a small stream and a muddy pool near barns housing a herd of Water Buffalo were fertile feeding areas for a few migrant waders, a Solitary Sandpiper in summer plumage and three or four Least Sandpipers. In this same area, a pair of Yellow-hooded Blackbirds was tending the needs of a juvenile Shiny Cowbird which presumably had replaced their own young, and Yellow-chinned Spinetails chattered away from waterside vegetation, one perching on a fence for our scrutiny.

The Research Station always promises a feast of birds but we had enjoyed a particularly productive visit and it was hard to drag ourselves away when Jogi eventually announced that it was time to depart. Continuing south after a brief 'comfort-stop' at Vallencia, we reached the coast at Manzanilla Beach and turned into a palm-fringed recreational area beside this long curving Atlantic beach. Jogi and Mahase prepared lunch as we gazed out at the breakers, watched in anticipation by a few lethargic dogs lying in the sun. The sea was quite rough discouraging any thoughts of bathing but a few locals were relaxing on the beach. It was quite noticeable that nearly all the palms were looking quite yellow and it was alarming to learn that a disease is attacking many of the trees along the coast threatening to destroy this characteristic symbol of the tropics. It would be a particular loss here as Manzanilla is the archetypal Caribbean coastline, a curving strand of palm fringed yellow beach which stretches for many kilometres to the south.

Usually Grey-breasted Martins are much in evidence around the car park and nest in the buildings but today they were not at home although a few Short-tailed Swifts chased around after insects and Carib Grackles looked for scraps. Once the delicious lunch had been demolished, and the scabby undernourished dogs provided with their meal of the year (much to Jogi's disapproval), we boarded the mini-buses to complete the final part of the journey to Nariva. To the left of the road coconut groves extended the length of the shore, whilst to our right, a narrower belt of palms bordered the edge of the vast patchwork of forest, bushes and marsh which comprises Nariva Swamp.

Jogi drove slowly along the road looking for birds, much to the annoyance of the various motorists racing along the coast road like trainee Lewis Hamilton's.

It is not conducive to relaxed birdwatching when a car suddenly roars past with a blast of horn and sound system set on maximum but we persevered in the early afternoon heat and saw a few species along the way including the anticipated Yellow-headed Caracara, a very close Savannah Hawk, and at one spot, a surprising trio of Limpkins perched high in the palms.

Planned stops further along the road allowed us to look for a few of the mangrove specialities at several places where fingers of marsh extend to the edge of the highway. Unfortunately the fierce afternoon heat did not help our activities and we saw relatively little here although a Striated Heron was a new bird for the list and a Brown-crested Flycatcher was glimpsed by some.

The appearance of a few egrets beside the road heralded our arrival at the main wetland area, although at this time of the year it is something of a misnomer to refer to a swamp as very little water remained and most of the seasonal marsh was now cultivated or filled with swaying grasses. Turning off the main road we followed a road bisecting the 'marsh' giving access to the scatter of fisherman's huts standing on stilts to offer protection during the higher water levels of summer. It seemed to me that even since last year even greater areas had been burnt and taken over for cultivation but Jogi assured me that all would revert to marsh after the seasonal rains in June and July. Whatever the future, few waterbirds remained in the dried up ditches but as we toured around we did see many Smooth-billed Ani, typical birds of cultivation.

A few Marsh Tyrants and Water Tyrants were catching insects and Wattled Jacanas took advantage of every patch of water remaining. Four or five Striated Herons were also reminders of the areas origins and several Yellow-chinned Spinetails were observed including one pair building their bulky nest in a bush. Looking at his watch Jogi decided it was time to leave for the final stop of the day at Wallerfield but just as his mini-bus headed away those of us in Mahase's bus spotted a Zone-tailed Hawk gliding over the fields which fortunately was also seen from the other vehicle after they had been alerted by radio.

Previously a visit to Nariva would conclude by watching Red-bellied Macaws arriving at their roost in a line of palms near the marsh but in recent times the macaws had been seen in larger numbers at Wallerfield and the plan was to get to the old airfield in sufficient light to see their arrival. Fortunately we had no further delays and even managed to fit in a re-fuelling stop en route. I had been prepared for big changes at Wallerfield but was still taken aback by the transformation of the area around the old control tower which is now a major building site with construction work underway on creating a new campus and a small industrial park. We entered through a security check-point and skirted our way around the various lorries and JCB's working on the site but the airfield is a big place and at the furthest extremity of the former main runway, an area has been left untouched as a small wildlife reserve. It is here that a stand of Moriche Palms grow and these fruiting palms were the attraction for the macaws.

The first of the macaws had arrived ahead of us and were snatching supper from the palm seeds presenting wonderful views in the evening sun. Further groups noisily arrived and whilst some vanished into the midst of cover others were in less of a hurry and posed perfectly for our groups. In total over 30 birds arrived but we were distracted from counting by the appearance of other interesting species and by the distribution of rum punches from the vans! A close Yellow-headed Caracara was one of the diversions as were the antics of two or three Sulphury Flycatchers, another of the Wallerfield specialities which showed particularly well this evening.

A male Ruby Topaz teased us by perching just long enough to focus the telescope before zooming off but a tiny Southern Beardless Tyrannulet was much more obliging and may actually have been settling down to roost in view of the length of time it remained motionless in the foliage of a tree. A supporting cast including Fork-tailed Palm Swifts and Black-throated Mango rounded off another excellent day which had provided a wonderful selection of birds in a variety of different habitats. We left the macaws to sort out their sleeping arrangements and drove back up the Arima Valley for a late but welcome dinner at the AWC.

Day 5

Wednesday 16th April

The Trinidad Piping Guan, is the national bird of Trinidad, and endemic to the island, but having the build of a Turkey is a definite disadvantage in a country where chicken is a favourite meal and as a consequence the population has been greatly depleted. Formerly a small area in the NE of the island was regarded as offering the best chance of seeing this arboreal forest-dwelling oddity but in recent years one or two birds have been regularly seen in the forest surrounding Morne Bleu, just a few kilometres north of the AWC. The bird is notoriously hard to find after sunrise and so it was that soon after 0530 a bleary eyed Naturetrek group climbed into the two mini-buses and set off for a dawn appointment with the *Pavee*.

It was a cloudy, windy start to the day but we disembarked near the Communication masts at Morne Bleu, full of optimism at the chances of seeing this charismatic bird. Unfortunately the Piping Guan had not been told of our plans and spirits slowly began to sink as we scoured the forest edge without any sign of our quarry. Almost an hour went by and after checking lower down the hill for the third or fourth time I was trudging back towards the assembled group allowing thoughts of breakfast to enter my head when a large shape flapped into the trees close to the group. I dismissed this as being a vulture but the sudden animation of the tour members suggested otherwise and on speeding to join them I discovered that the shape had indeed been the elusive Piping Guan. Fortunately it soon reappeared from the canopy, walking towards us along the branches before taking wing and crossing the track. Here it climbed into a prominent position on a cecropia branch and to our delight, settled down to bask in the rays of the rising sun. It remained in this posture for many minutes enabling sensational telescope views in perfect light. To snatch success from despair was a great moment and there was a spring in our step as we returned to the vehicles.

Although our effort had been concentrated on trying to find the Piping Guan, the pre-breakfast outing also produced fine views of a perched Scaled Pigeon, a flying Blue-headed Parrot and plenty of Grey-rumped Swifts. An assortment of insects 'stranded' on the fence surrounding the radio masts included Katydid, a large Harlequin Beetle, and most impressive of all, an enormous Locust which looked rather vulnerable on the top strand of wire. A number of Grey-breasted Martins were beginning to catch their first meal of the day over the hill and with them we saw a few Southern Rough-winged Swallows.

We were soon demolishing our own breakfast back at the Centre and catching up on the action from the verandah. With an evening Turtle watching trip to look forward to, the rest of the day was free for tour members to spend however they wished and provided an opportunity for the keen photographers to pursue that perfect shot. Others opted to explore some of the trails or catch up on such chores as clothes washing and writing postcards! A variety of birds was collectively recorded and highlights included a splendid male Collared Trogon, Lineated Woodpecker, Golden-fronted Greenlets, and more close-ups of the ear-splitting Bellbirds.

After enjoying the tea and savouries on the verandah at 4pm we departed for the east coast to try for the Leatherback Turtles at Matura. Once we had turned off the main road at Valencia we entered an area of rather pleasant open countryside with plentiful trees but there was no time to stop as we wanted to reach the turtle beach in daylight in order to serve the picnic evening meal before nightfall. In the small town of Matura we collected a member of the turtle protection organisation and completed the drive to the isolated beach site down a bumpy track which is closed to all except those with permission to view the turtles. This final section of the journey produced excellent close-ups of graceful Plumbeous Kites and a brief encounter with three or four Red Howler Monkeys which eagle-eyed Mahase spotted at the top of a line of tall trees. Although nervous, the troupe contained a youngster which was more inclined to sit in the open and remained long enough for the telescope to be deployed. This was an unexpected bonus and an omen for the success of the evening!

The meal (roast lamb) was unpacked and set out in the hut which serves as the centre of the evening activities. Dusk was beginning to envelop the trees as we finished the excellent fare and while we waited for news from the beach we amused ourselves watching the several different species of firefly which were sending their signals from all around us. Eventually the message reached us that a turtle was ashore and with mounting excitement we made our way in the dark along a path to the place on the beach where the members of the turtle protection team were grouped around the unmistakable bulk of a female Leatherback on the beach.

The usual practice is to wait until the reptile has excavated an egg chamber and then allow visitors to admire the creature once it has entered the trance-like egg laying state when nothing seems to cause alarm. Unfortunately this individual had chosen to dig a chamber rather too close to the advancing tide and after we had gathered around it in a semi-circle the waves soon lapped around our feet and began to flood into the chamber. The experts had seen it all before and realizing that the turtles efforts were doomed to failure at this spot persuaded her to heave herself a little further up the beach to try again. This she eventually did although watching her laboured progress was a perfect illustration of what an effort it is for these animals to leave the water. As this was going on another female appeared among the breakers and news also reached us that a third was about to begin egg-laying back along the beach.

I was torn between following the original female but decided to join the watchers around the newer arrival which was well on her way to completing laying her clutch. Photographs were being taken and as always, it was an awesome experience to be so close to such a magnificent creature. I could not resist the invitation to stroke her powerful head and feel the marble like texture of the exquisite neck and flippers which illuminated by the torches showed amazingly intricate markings. Once the egg laying was complete the turtle suffered the temporary indignity of being fitted into a harness and suspended from a tripod to ascertain her weight but this is all part of the conservation efforts which have seen nesting success on this beach soar and given this severely endangered species a chance of survival. All females are now automatically micro-chipped and the data gathered each season is giving the conservationists a mass of information to help understand the mysterious world of the Leatherback Turtle.

A fourth female was coming ashore nearby but after the rest of the group had arrived to witness the egg laying we decided to take our leave of the beach and begin the two hour drive back to the Centre. The turtle team had only just begun their night vigil and the Leatherbacks are fortunate that so many dedicated and enthusiastic locals are prepared to spend every night ensuring that no-one steals the eggs and preaching turtle conservation to the steady stream of interested visitors. Long may they continue!

Day 6

Thursday 17th April

Today's agenda included a visit to Dunstan Caves for the Oilbirds and optional night birding in the evening but like most other days it was the dawn performance from the verandah that got things started! The now familiar stream of birds paid their first visits to the tables and one or two less regular sightings included a Black-tailed Tityra, an Ochre-bellied Flycatcher and the itinerant Long-billed Gnatwren which returned to the bushes after an absence of a few days. A real highlight for all was a magnificent Ornate Hawk Eagle perched on a tree in the valley where it remained for some time and allowed prolonged telescope study of this most attractive of raptors.

After breakfast we joined AWC guide Harold to visit Dunstan Cave, the site of the oilbird colony. The Guacharo trail is quite steep in places and more demanding than some other trails in the grounds but easily negotiable with care and progress is invariably slow as we bird along the way, noting today such species as Streaked Flycatcher, Red-crowned Ant-Tanager and Golden-headed Manakin.

Safely assembled down in the valley, the group took turns to scramble over rocks to the mouth of the grotto from where the Oilbirds could be viewed. These peculiar nocturnal birds are certainly quite extraordinary and it is not surprising that early explorers, on hearing the assortment of shrieks and noises produced by the birds, thought that such caves were inhabited by evil spirits. Surprisingly large birds, the Oilbirds were mostly sitting on ledges at the back of the cave but several flew around as we watched, their long wings and tail giving an almost falcon like silhouette. A partial collapse of the cave roof now allows much more light into the interior, but this doesn't seem to have upset the Oilbirds and simply makes viewing easier than before, particularly when the sun was shining. As always, it was a magical experience and a privilege to share a few moments with these remarkable birds. Viewing has been greatly improved by the construction of a wooden platform which makes things much easier than before.

As the group waited their turn at the cave mouth, a Rufous-breasted Hermit paid regular visits to the clearing and entertainment was also provided by tiny frogs in the pools. The climb back up the trail was enlivened by various birds and good views of another Caligo Butterfly resting on a tree. Some of the group headed back to the verandah after the Oilbird experience whilst the rest accompanied me along the Bellbird trail which loops through the forest more or less parallel with the Discovery trail. A Plain Brown Woodcreeper presented us with views along the trail, a Euler's Flycatcher was quietly chasing insects near a fallen log and we passed another Golden-headed Manakin lek before finally reaching the Bellbird area where four or five males were competing in their own song competition. After much effort we did see one or two of the callers but as usual they were frustratingly difficult to pick out in the canopy despite the loudness of the calls above our heads. Making our way back to the Centre for lunch we enjoyed an encounter with four or more Violaceous Trogons engaged in some sort of territorial dispute near the picnic site.

After another tasty buffet lunch we wandered for a time along the entrance road, this time in drier conditions than on the first afternoon. Several Cocoa Woodcreepers were calling from the forest and we finally managed to obtain views of one clinging to the trunk of a roadside tree. Other birds seen during the afternoon included Golden-fronted Greenlets, Turquoise and Bay-headed Tanagers and another Lineated Woodpecker hacking away at the bark of a tall tree. Back at the verandah for afternoon tea, at least two Plumbeous Kites glided over the valley and at least four Channel-billed Toucans were evident.

After the tea break we travelled back down to the lowlands for an evening night birding at Wallerfield. Before darkness settled we had time for a little birding at the Moriche Palms and tonight over 40 Red-bellied Macaws were noisily present in the roost area, fussing over spaces and snatching a late supper. A male Black-crested Ant-Shrike, calling as it moved through the canopy, was a pleasant surprise and a Zone-tailed Hawk appeared briefly over the palms. Other Wallerfield birds such as Sulphury Flycatcher, Fork-tailed Palm Swift and Ruby Topaz were noted but there was no appearance by the elusive Moriche Orioles which had been apparently difficult to find in recent weeks.

We eventually had to stop scanning the trees in order to eat our own picnic dinner which the team had set out for us in the recreational area and by the time we had demolished the Shepherd's Pie the first of a myriad of fireflies had begun flashing from the forest edge. Climbing aboard the mini-bus we began an hour or so driving around the old airfield hoping to see some of the nocturnal residents. A Tropical Screech Owl played with us for some while calling from nearby but never approaching close enough to be illuminated by the spot-light. Fortunately both White-tailed Nightjars and Pauraques were rather more obliging and by the time we were obliged to head back to the AWC everyone had enjoyed close ups of both species sitting on the concrete and flying around over the runways. It is perhaps too early to know whether the night birding trips will continue after the Wallerfield development is completed but for the moment the old airfield remains a great place to see these two species of nightjar and if nothing else it is worth the visit to admire the fireflies and the wonderful display of stars in the clear sky over Wallerfield.

Day 7

Friday 18th April

Our morning excursion was to visit the Aripo and Arena Forests in the lowlands which entailed a 0600 breakfast and 0630 departure in order to fit in birding before the intense heat of the day. Everyone was very punctual and before the other guests were tucking into their breakfasts, we were enjoying some early morning birding at the roadside lower down the Arima valley. The reason for our stop was to look for some Trinidad Euphonias seen in this locality recently and it did not take long for Mahase to detect this attractive little birds call and locate a pair feeding typically on a kind of mistletoe. Almost predictably, the stop produced several other interesting sightings including at least two Streaked Xenops looking like brightly coloured treecreepers as they explored the foliage, a Southern Beardless Tyrannulet and a Blue-black Grassquit. After this successful interlude we headed next to try our luck for Striped Cuckoo at a spot where we had seen one in 2007. Sadly the cuckoo was not at home but we did find a pair of Barred Antshrikes, several Yellow-bellied Elaenias and a singing Greyish Saltator.

From here we moved a short distance to the now familiar airfield at Wallerfield and despite an unpromising start a lovely male Masked Yellowthroat eventually responded to Jogi's tape and showed reasonably well in a patch of weedy vegetation close to the main entrance gate to the building development. Moving on from this scene of industry we meandered around what remains of the airfield, pausing to admire a female Ruby Topaz sitting on her exquisite little nest. Impressive numbers of vultures spiralling overhead were roughly in the ration of one Turkey to every hundred Black!

Four or five Common Ground Doves feeding on road in front of the vehicles were a delightful precursor to a spell of excellent birding in a tract of tall trees at the edge of the airfield which provide a belt of cover for forest loving birds.

This is always a good spot but is typical forest in that for long periods the trees can seem deceptively quiet then suddenly the place erupts and a mixed feeding flock appears filling the canopy with noise and movement only to quickly subside back to silence. This was the pattern of our observations here with the result that not everyone managed to see all the birds that appeared during the brief moments when several new species were in view at once. One of the highlights was a male White-winged Becard which showed well if you were standing in exactly the right spot but was often no more than a movement in the canopy! A Rufous-browed Peppershrike was almost in the same category but did eventually remain in view long enough for most to see.

Other birds included Violaceous Trogon, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Yellow-breasted Flycatcher, Black-crested Antshrike, Chivi Vireo, Golden-fronted Greenlet and more Yellow-bellied Elaenias. Repeating an appearance in the same place last year, the most unusual sighting was of a Streaked-headed Woodcreeper which arrived from out of the forest and clung to the bark of a tree near the road before flying off into deeper cover. This is one of the scarcer woodcreepers and made an excellent top of the bill to a distinguished cast of avian performers.

After all this ornithological excitement a refreshment stop was in order and we stopped at the usual place in Comuto opposite a tree which is now rather isolated but is still populated by a small colony of Yellow-rumped Caciques along with their attendant Piratic Flycatchers. The caciques were busy flying back and forth to their pendulous nests and our antics seemed to amuse some of the locals who must by now be used to birdwatchers paying pilgrimage to this lone tree.

Underway again we headed to Arena Forest, which is probably the largest area of forest in the lowlands and fringes the huge Arena reservoir which unfortunately is no longer accessible. It was by now far too late in the day for the forest to be at its best but none the less we finished our morning with more memorable sightings including a pair of Blue Dacnis, a briefly watched Squirrel Cuckoo, White-tailed Trogons, Golden-headed Manakins and a couple of Plumbeous Kites gliding buoyantly over the trees. Heroic efforts by Jogui and Mahase to persuade calling White-bellied Antbirds into view were so nearly successful with birds answering from cover only metres away but for most of the group these arch skulkers remained no more than movements in the undergrowth.

Birding over, we sped back to the Asa Wright Centre for another hearty lunch followed by a relaxing afternoon which once again the group spent in different ways, some choosing to catch up on card writing whilst others occupied the veranda and visited the Upper Car Park area. Both Barred and Great AntShrikes were patrolling the shrubbery between the chalets, a Golden Olive Woodpecker appeared and Tufted Coquettes gave a fine performance. We also heard a Little Tinamou calling from deep in the forest and as it approached Rum punch time a Squirrel Cuckoo caused great excitement by emerging at the top of the Oropendola tree and teasing us with fleeting views before apparently going to roost.

Day 8

Saturday 19th April

Our final action-packed day at the AWC began like all the others with the convening of the 6am club on the veranda and the gradual coming-alive of the forest birds. As the tanagers, thrushes and honeycreepers flew in to sample the morning fare on the tables, the veranda Palm Tanagers were on their way back out into the world after a night of confinement behind the shutters!

The safe, predator free environment overnight obviously suits the birds but it is always entertaining to watch their antics at first light as they impatiently wait for the shutters to be removed! There was a poignancy about this being our final free show but the performers came and went in their usual manner and a new intake of guests marvelled at their first morning in the stalls as we 'veterans' exchanged knowing glances! After thinking only one Red-legged Honeycreeper had been present all week it was a surprise on this last morning to see two males and a female sipping from one of the feeders!

After breakfast we joined Jogi and Mahase at the start of a long day in the field which would involve visits to Waterloo mud-flats, Caroni Swamp and other wetlands on the west side of the island. First stop was at Trincity Water treatment ponds just off the main highway into Port of Spain. These tree-fringed freshwater ponds have a distinguished history of rare bird sightings and always reward even the briefest of stops although a new building development has almost reached the perimeter and I fear that Trincity will soon become part of Trinidad birding history.

Today we quickly made the acquaintance once again of typical wetland species such as Wattled Jacana, White-headed Marsh Tyrant and Pied Water-Tyrant but also noted a number of new birds including a briefly glimpsed Purple Gallinule and several Common Moorhens, one of the few old friends from Europe. A number of Snowy Egrets were feeding along the banks whilst Spotted Sandpipers in breeding dress and the inevitable Southern Lapwing frequented the waters edge. The thick carpets of aquatic vegetation on some of the pools concealed Yellow-chinned Spinetails, many Yellow-hooded Blackbirds and several Striated Herons. White-winged Swallows in company with several Grey-breasted Martins and Rough-wing Swallows were feeding over the water surface, often passing close over our heads as we walked along the causeways separating the pools. A few Spectacled Caiman were also floating in the water on the look out for any creatures passing within range. An Osprey passed over the pools as we arrived but was almost the only surprise and the relative paucity of birds perhaps reflected the changes which are already taking place with several tanks already drained.

Rejoining the ceaseless streams of traffic on the expressway we continued towards Caroni, pausing briefly by the roadside to watch a superb male Long-winged Harrier gliding elegantly backwards and forwards over fields beside the road. Despite partly blocking a fairly narrow road and incurring the wrath of the passing motorists we couldn't pass by this magnificent bird and spilled out of the vehicles to enjoy the sight.

We then endured the heat and noise of the main road for another half an hour as we made our way to the area know generally as Waterloo, a flat uninspiring stretch of mudflats and fields south of Caroni Swamp but a mecca for shorebirds. First stop at the start of a little jetty was a spectacular moment as we emerged from the vehicles to inspect a dense flock of birds resting on the mud a few hundred metres from the shore.

The flock comprised large numbers of Black Skimmers and summer plumaged Laughing Gulls admixed with about 20 Royal Terns, a good few Large-billed Terns and two Common Terns. The flock was a fine sight and the actual number present would be made more obvious every so often when a 'dread' would cause most of the birds to take wing and swirl around for a while before settling back again. As we scanned around the vast expanse of exposed mud we picked out numbers of Great & Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons and a few Tricoloured Herons wading about in search of crabs whilst rows of Brown Pelicans snoozed on convenient boats.

Waders included Hudsonian Whimbrel, Greater Yellowlegs, Semi-palmated Ringed Plover, Willets, Turnstone and a few 'peeps' difficult to identify for certainty in the strong sun but probably Semi-palmated Sandpipers. The overall scene was one of continuous activity and looking around it was possible to see some of the skimmers performing their party act over the water and a constant movement of terns and gulls from one spot to another. A small flock of Yellow-billed Terns dashed overhead just before we prepared to leave and surprisingly this proved to be our only sighting of this Little Tern look-alike.

It was now very hot and we were glad of a little shade when we moved to our next stop at Waterloo itself. The glistening mudflats near the Hindu Temple at Waterloo were also full of birds and the mixture was much the same with hundreds of egrets and herons scattered over the mudflats, although rather more Tricoloured Herons seemed to be here. A few more waders were noted including both Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, and in one inlet almost every one of a line of wooden posts was occupied by either a Large-billed Tern or Laughing Gull. Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons were present in the bay and waders in this bay included a summer plumage Short-billed Dowitchers, a Black-necked Stilt, more Willets and a few Knot.

We had enjoyed great coastal birding but time was marching on and with lunch in mind we headed back to Caroni temporarily entering the madness of the highway for another thirty minute run, this time driving north towards Port of Spain. In complete contrast to the noise and mayhem of the roads it was peace and tranquility back at the Caroni Swamp information centre as we unloaded the picnic lunch and retired to the cool of the building for our meal. Once again it was another tasty triumph from the Centre kitchens and we enjoyed the food in the company of Carib Grackles and a scrawny puppy, both with scavenging scraps in mind. Other birds were present here at the edge of the mangrove swamp and included an immature Anhinga, a few egrets and some fluorescent Scarlet Ibis feeding among the trees. We could not find the resident Red-capped Cardinals, although one did fly across the clearing at speed, but another speciality of the area, the Straight-billed Woodcreeper, was more obliging. Encouraged by Mahase's mimicry, the fourth woodcreeper species of the week eventually posed nicely in front of the Information Centre before dashing out of sight.

After the meal we eventually boarded one of James Nandoo's boats for an exploration of the Swamp with his young-looking but confident son Sean in control of the boat. At just before four we set off along the long, straight canal which leads to the beginning of the Swamp, pausing along the way for our youthful captain to point out some of the inhabitants such as the tiny crabs inhabiting the forest of roots, and the Four-eyed Fish, or Anableps, a strange little mud-skipper which can survive on the mud at low tide. Sean also explained the differences between the three species of mangrove growing at Caroni and manoeuvred the boat to allow views of no less than three Green Mangos sitting on perches above the water. After this brilliant start we could hardly fail and were soon beginning to encounter more herons and egrets amongst the trees as we approached the more open areas, these accompanied by more Scarlet Ibises. Mahase had joined us from the trip and there was soon a friendly rivalry between him and Sean as to who could spot the most impossibly hidden creature in the mangroves.

First, Sean eased the boat up to a snoozing Silky Anteater curled up amid the foliage, then the first of two Cook's Boas similarly passing the day in the lower canopy of the trees. It was Mahase however that won the prize by somehow detecting a Common Potoo which was in such an obscure position that even Sean couldn't see it until he followed Mahase's instructions where to position the boat. This strange night bird was characteristically sitting like an extension of the tree it was perched on and even from the stationary boat was far from easy to pick out.

I think Sean, who spends every day looking for such finds, was impressed by the way Mahase had spotted the bird in the fraction of a second it had been visible through the tangle of mangroves! After such a find, Bicoloured Conebill was less of a challenge and we had fine views of a lovely male hopping about on the mud below the trees.

Nosing into the main channel we found large numbers of herons and egrets scattered about, some in the mangroves others on the exposed mud. Yellow-crowned Night Herons were numerous but there were also plenty of Little Blue & Tricoloured Herons, Great & Snowy Egrets. Eventually we moored in a remote corner of the swamp to watch the ibis fly-past and this was my cue to distribute cakes and rum-punches. At first there was a relative lack of action on this clear sunny evening but gradually the influx began and with drinks in hand we settled back to watch flock after flock of ibis, herons and egrets flying over the water to either pitch onto an island ahead of us or continue over the trees to another more distant site. Unfortunately, although plenty of ibises arrived, many were intent on going elsewhere but reasonable numbers pitched into the main roosting island opposite our mooring. The mangroves were soon filling up with Tricoloured Herons and egrets but the dyno-rod adult Ibises were outnumbered by duller immatures although eventually a few hundred were probably present. At length it was time to return and as we raced back, wave after wave of herons and egrets were passing low over the water.

The crimson of the setting sun, the pink sky and the scarlet of the ibises combined together to provide an enduring memory of our visit and a fine climax to a very enjoyable week of Caribbean birding. With thoughts focused on the evening meal awaiting us, not everyone saw the Opossum which dashed across the road in front of the vans as we drove along the entrance road for the last time.

Day 9

Sunday 20th April

Then we drove down the hill for one last time as we drove to Piarco for an early-morning flight to Tobago. It was sad to wave goodbye to Jogi and Mahase, who had been such pleasant company for the week, and also a bit unnerving to be cast out into the big wide world after the security of life at the AWC!

We checked-in with plenty of time to spare and twenty minutes after taking off from Piarco, the Dash-8 aircraft touched down at Crown Point Tobago and we emerged into the morning heat. Predictably, Caribbean Martins flying above the buildings was the first Tobago bird speciality for our list, a noticeably bluer and darker looking bird than the Grey-breasted Martins left behind on Trinidad. At first there was no sign of our guide Adolphus James but we were a little earlier than scheduled and after a few moments, a coach drew up in front of the almost deserted terminal building driven by the distinctive figure of the veteran Tobago bird guide.

First stop on a hot Tobago morning was the water treatment works at Bon Accord where we spent an hour or so scanning the pools. An unexpected brisk shower curtailed activities for a while but it soon passed and we entered the works. About a dozen Anhingas were sitting around on the banks of the pools and other birds here included summer plumaged Spotted Sandpipers, many Eared Doves and more Caribbean Martins. A Belted Kingfisher was seen perched on the wires for a few moments during the shower but unfortunately did not show again. Green-rumped Parrotlets were easier to telescope on the fence surrounding the works and as we walked around several Green Herons were flushed, the Tobago equivalent of the Striated Herons seen on Trinidad. Also noted were a Great White Egret, a single Snowy Egret, moorhens, Wattled Jacanas and a Yellow-headed Caracara.

At least 15 Least Grebes frequented the open water of the pools and on one pool a flock of 12 White-cheeked or Bahama Pintail paused long enough to permit telescope scrutiny. Interesting though the residents were, the highlight for me was an impressive spiralling flock of Broad-winged Hawks which appeared in the sky above Bon Accord then gradually drifted north. At least a hundred hawks were involved in this migration and another 'kettle' of similar size seen ten minutes later may well have been different birds. These raptors would be bound for North America and it was a great thrill to see such visible evidence of migration taking place.

After leaving the works, Adolphus took us a short distance along a road which skirts the mangrove edge of the big lagoon nearby. Sadly this area is now being destroyed by a massive amount of new building work but remnants of habitat remain in which we saw a Red-crowned Woodpecker, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Yellow-bellied Elaenias and White-tipped Doves. A ditch beside the road also contained several summer plumaged Solitary Sandpipers as well as both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs which conveniently stood side by side for comparison. The last sighting before leaving Bon Accord was of a nervous pair of Rufous-vented Chachalacas urging us to move on as several very attractive young chicks were blundering about at the edge of the road eliciting many admiring sounds from our group.

From Bon Accord we drove a short way along the west coast to visit Grafton Estate. En route a flock of about 25 Roseate Terns fishing just offshore prompted a quick stop and this proved to be our only encounter with this most elegant of terns which still nests in reasonable numbers on Tobago. At Grafton, which is best described as a dilapidated and largely deserted poor man's AWC, we were treated to some excellent views of some typical Tobago birds including Red-crowned Woodpecker, Chachalacas, Blue-crowned Motmot, Barred Antshrike, White-tipped & Eared Doves, Pale-vented Pigeon, Scrub Greenlet, Yellow-bellied Elaenias, Brown-crested Flycatcher and our first White-fringed Antwrens. Some of the group accompanied Adolphus on a longer hike into the heart of the Estate and were rewarded with good views of the delightful Blue-backed Manakin which is another Tobago speciality. Grafton is a fine place to make the acquaintance of the island birds and regular feeding have made many of the species very tame but midday is not a good time to visit and thus we rarely do it justice.

After this brief birding interlude we re-joined the main road and headed north. One of the mysteries of science is that Tobago is only 21 miles long yet it seems to take forever to get from the south to the north but today the journey did not seem too bad. At last, after passing through various immaculately maintained villages with very British names like Glamorgan and Mount Irvine, we finally reached the viewpoint overlooking Speyside and dropped down towards the coast for one last time. Idyllic coves and beaches along the way had been populated by a few Laughing Gulls and Brown Pelicans whilst roadside birds had included White-tipped Doves and Orange-winged Parrots in the forested areas.

Lunch had been booked at Jemma's Tree House Restaurant beside the beach at Speyside and we arrived to find this popular establishment full of chattering diners. The meal that followed was one of the most enjoyable of the tour enhanced by the superb location and the ambience of the open sided building constructed amid the branches of a big Almond tree. Carib Grackles and a Tropical Mockingbird roamed the tables hovering up any discarded scraps but there was not much left at our table after a huge plate of shrimps had been demolished. From Jemma's it was just a short drive to the Blue Waters Inn tucked away in a private cove a few kilometres outside the village and as we approached the hotel I could see from the way some tour members were looking at the azure waters of the bay, that swimming would be high on the afternoon agenda!

We settled into our beachside rooms and reflected on how pleasant it was to have arrived at our final destination. Bateaux Bay is just about as idyllic a spot as you can wish to find and birds visible from the beach included Laughing Gulls offshore, more distant Brown Boobies and frigates beyond Little Tobago Island, and a dozen or so extremely confiding Turnstone on the sand. A leisurely walk through the hotel garden, and along the entrance road towards Speyside, produced a typical assortment of Tobago birds including White-tipped Doves, Pale-vented Pigeons, Blue-crowned Motmots Yellow-bellied Elaenias and Chachalacas which seemed to be all over the grounds with several loitering near the hotel entrance waiting for food to be put out for them. Following a track that circles around the hillside above the hotel we found a pleasing selection of species in the bushes including Barred Antshrikes, 3-4 White-flanked Ant Wrens, Black-faced Grassquits and several Ruby Topaz hummingbirds along with a few Copper-rumped.

Later, sitting at the hotel bar sipping a cool coco-punch with the sound of the waves lapping on the beach, Trinidad already seemed far away. In the moonlight a Yellow-crowned Night Heron was visible standing on the beach and for the next few days this very tame individual was often to be seen here, looking a bit like a gatecrasher denied entrance to the party going on in the bar!

Day 10

Monday 21st April

The Blue Waters provided an early breakfast for us to facilitate a prompt departure to the Tobago Rain Forest. Despite living at the other end of the island, Gladwyn arrived before we had finished eating and we set off for the forest, a drive of about 45 minutes from the hotel. We were hardly ten minutes into the journey however when some Green-rumped Parrotlets fussing around a telephone pole necessitated a quick stop to admire these pretty little birds which were formerly only found in the south of the island but have now colonized the highlands.

Children were on their way to school as we passed through the villages, their school uniforms looking pristine and clean on this monday morning. We were soon climbing away from Roxborough into the Rain Forest Preserve, the oldest forest sanctuary in the Caribbean, as proclaimed on a roadside sign. The densely forested central spine of hills not only forms the geological back-bone to the island but is also the refuge of many interesting birds including the three Tobago specialities we particularly hoped to find; White tailed Sabrewing, Blue-backed Manakin and Yellow-legged Thrush.

Before starting the morning walk we went first to the Bloody Bay lookout point to use the toilets there and on the way had brief roadside views of Great Black Hawk with another soaring in the distance over the undulating forested hills. First stop after the comfort break was Gilpin Trace, a narrow trail through the heart of the forest which can be muddy at times providing a source of income for enterprising locals who hire out wellington boots to visitors with inappropriate footwear! It had however been quite dry recently and the entrepreneurs barely registered our arrival. From time to time however we were passed by crocodiles of tourists being escorted on a 'rain-forest' experience by intrepid guides but whether they enjoyed striding along the trail is a matter of conjecture! We proceeded slowly, allowing time for the forest birds to reveal themselves but on this hot morning it was quite hard work with long periods of seeing very little. Blue-backed Manakins were almost constantly to be heard, uttering their variety of calls but obtaining views was a different matter and the same was true of Stripe-throated Spinetails which 'peeped' away from the undergrowth at several places.

White-necked Thrushes were seen and heard several times along the trail but we had progressed some distance before the fluty tones of a Yellow-legged Thrush proclaimed the presence of this shy forest thrush high in the canopy of a giant tree. Initially it was hard work obtaining views of this Blackbird look-alike but on the way back we were luckier and had a number of sightings including one male at just a few metres range. Although superficially like a British Blackbird the bright yellow legs and eye ring are striking and the bright yellow bill is distinctly broad based giving a different look to the head. The third member of the Gilpin trio, the White-tailed Sabrewing was also hard to find at first although we did see Copper-rumped Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin and Rufous-breasted Hermit in the forest. Inevitably however the first Sabrewing finally appeared and obligingly landed on a twig just a few metres above our head after charging backwards and forwards through the forest at astonishing speed. Other sightings followed and when rivals displayed to each other in mid-air the fanned white tail feathers glowed like beacons in the dark canopy. In total we must have seen half a dozen during the morning and enjoyed tremendous telescope close-ups.

Two other colourful birds nesting in holes beside the trail were the Blue-crowned Motmot and the Rufous-tailed Jacamar. Both were exceptionally confiding as we passed through their territories and provided superb views. Ignoring the unwelcome attentions of biting insects, we continued along Gilpin Trace until we reached the beginning of the waterfall then retraced our steps back to the road, the return walk being accomplished at a more rapid rate than the outward leg. As always in forest habitats, not all the birds recorded during the morning were seen by all the party but highlights included; Rufous-breasted Hermit (& nest), Golden-Olive Woodpecker, Plain Brown Woodcreeper, Chivi Vireo, Rufous-breasted Wren, Ochre-breasted and Fuscous Flycatchers.

We ate our picnic lunch in a shelter near the entrance to Gilpin Trace and desultory birding at the forest edge provided further views of Yellow-legged Thrush and a big flycatcher quietly catching insects which we decided was a Venezuelan Flycatcher, a species not easy to identify without hearing it call.

After the meal we drove a short distance to follow another trail leading through the forest. As usual, this less disturbed trail was an excellent site to hear and observe lekking Blue-backed Manakins. Without too much difficulty everyone gained nice views of these delightful little birds although the trail was extremely mud and we paid the price with mud-caked boots! Watching the manakins leaping around was certainly one of the memories of the holiday. A singing Yellow-legged Thrush received less attention than it would have drawn earlier in the day but showed very well for those present as did a Cocoa Woodcreeper and a confiding pair of Plain Ant-Vireos moving quietly through the foliage. The sticky mud and persistent insects rather deterred us from spending too long on the trail but it had more than repaid the effort by the manakin performance.

Back at the Blue Waters there was time for an afternoon dip for the energetic, or a drink or two in the bar under the pretext of counting the Turnstones!

Day 11

Tuesday 22nd April

At 9, we boarded Frank Wordsworth's glass-bottomed boat at the Blue Waters quay and headed out over the reefs to Little Tobago Island. Frank was away somewhere so the guide for our trip soon demonstrated he had the same line of patter as his boss! Steering across the slightly choppy waters beyond Goat Island, we passed fishing Brown Boobies, one or two Brown Noddies and tropicbirds before arriving at Little Tobago where a dry landing was possible on the narrow quay.

As we approached along the edge of the island a few more Brown Noddies were visible on the rocks. Resisting the temptation to tick the feral chickens which forage in the undergrowth, we climbed up through the forested slopes of the island stopping to look at Chivi Vireos, Motmots and Bare-eyed Thrushes along the way. We also paused to inspect an Audubon's Shearwater nest burrow at the beginning of the trail but it was a bit of an effort to see the grey shape of the chick inside the chamber and most of us were content to just look at the nest hole from the beach.

We paused for breath as the path levelled out and waited for a while at the ram-shackled building which serves a visitor centre, to watch mockingbirds, Blue-grey Tanagers and other small birds coming to drink from bamboo troughs. Sturdy Brown-crested Flycatchers and Yellow-bellied Elaenias also lined up to sip the water whilst other birds in the vicinity included White-tipped Doves and Ruby Topaz Hummingbirds.

Continuing along the main path we continued up to the highest viewpoint where a wooden shelter affords some protection from the fierce sun. Here the wider panorama of the cliffs was easy to appreciate as tropicbirds glided past at eye level and boobies circled around the bay. A number of pairs of Red-footed Boobies were present and a number of well grown young were visible in tree-top nests. Both light and dark phase adults were present although most of the nesting adults seemed to be the paler form. Brown Boobies are the commoner of the two species and many lined the edges of the cliffs or were fishing in the waters offshore, returning regularly with food for their youngsters. This traffic was not unnoticed by the many Frigates which harassed both tropicbirds and boobies especially offshore where the birds were feeding. A juvenile tropicbird was found a short distance from the shelter and like the birds seen earlier it was almost fully grown and would soon be contending with the frigates in the cruel world beyond its nest! Caribbean Martins circling around with Short-tailed Swifts over the bay, were shooting past us at head height but defied the reactions of the photographers.

The essence of Little Tobago is not the number of species but the overall spectacle of the seabirds in this wonderfully tranquil and picturesque setting with the St. Giles group of islands visible in the distance and the forested hills of the mainland just a few kilometres to the west. Although plenty of summer plumage Laughing Gulls were displaying noisily on the rocks below the cliff, the terns were not yet in residence and sadly the only Sooty Terns of the morning were a small group flying past offshore. Normally all the interest at the lookout is seaward but just a few metres from the shelter two White-tailed Nightjars created an alternative attraction beside the path. These two nightjars were roosting in the undergrowth, one perched on a log and the other on the ground. Both were amazingly tame not bothering to even open their eyes as cameras clicked and people passed by less than a metre away! It was an exceptional opportunity to study the intricate markings of their cryptic feathering and for me was the major highlight of our visit.

We could easily have spent many more hours on the island but our boat was likely to turn into a pumpkin after midday so we reluctantly set off back to the landing stage, pausing briefly to look at Ruby-topaz Hummingbirds and Brown-crested Flycatchers beside the trail. In reverse of the usual sequence, our skipper took us back over the coral reef before returning to the hotel. We were soon over the coral and the clear, shallow water enabled us to have ringside seats for a wonderful show of tropical underwater life with our guide giving his own distinctive commentary. Groups of Black Surge wrasse and Creole Wrasse cruised the reef, and like actors crossing a stage, various other species swam into view below the observation glass. The skipper missed little and rattled off the names like a Caribbean John Motson, as Stop-light Parrot-fishes, Four-eyed Butterflies, Blue Tang and many other exotic fishes made their appearances.

Equally amazing were the diverse corals of many different forms and colours which he also identified for us. A huge Brain Coral loomed beneath the boat, contrasting with Fire Coral, Pillar Coral, Dead Man's Fingers and the rare towers of Black Coral. Giant Clam Sponges completed a whistle-stop introduction to the Angel Reef and whetted the appetite for any of the group wishing to try some snorkelling. A big surprise during the Reef tour was the very brief appearance of a Hawksbill Turtle swimming past underneath the boat, by no means a regular sight on these excursions.

After a protracted lunch-break, during which some of the group went swimming, we ambled down to Speyside for some leisurely birdwatching. A pair of Grey Kingbirds was well watched fussing around an untidy nest on a telegraph post and several Black-faced Grassquits hopped around beside the path. Other sightings included Yellow-bellied Elaenias, House Wrens, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Pale-vented and White-tipped Doves.

At the evening log, which we conducted each evening in the TV lounge behind the beach bar, it was discovered that a new maximum had been recorded for the Blue Water's Turnstone flock—an impressive 20+! These long distance travellers face a long journey to their Arctic breeding grounds but for the moment seemed very happy to be roaming a Caribbean beach. Also seen during the day were two or three Hawksbill Turtles 'grazing' just offshore and surfacing regularly to snatch gulps of air.

Day 12

Wednesday 23rd April

Best observation pre-breakfast was a fine Belted Kingfisher perched on a branch overlooking the Speyside corner of the Blue Waters bay. It stayed long enough for us to set up telescopes and made up for the fleeting glimpse at Bon Accord. After an early breakfast we again joined Gladwyn for a second visit to the Rain Forest, the group split between those choosing to relax at the hotel and those ready to do battle with the forest birds. This time our first stop was to view some fruiting roadside trees where several Rufous-tailed Jacamars and Golden-Olive Woodpeckers vied for attention with ten or more Red-legged Honeycreepers.

As Bryan had not been with us on the previous visit we went initially to the Manakin lek but although some males were present the lek never really got underway and we were denied a repeat performance. A male Collared Trogon was a stunning sight further along the trail but the glutinous mud discouraged a longer exploration. A small Golden Tegu lizard on the path was however the first we had seen on Tobago.

Gilpin Trace was once again busy with crocodiles of tourists being shown the 'forest experience' but we made our way at a slower pace and saw most of the species from our previous visit including Sabrewings, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Yellow-legged Thrush, Cocoa and Plain Brown Woodcreepers. Also present was at least one pair of Plain Ant-Vireo and both Fuscous and Streaked Flycatchers.

We ate lunch in the shelter then in mid-afternoon began the descent to Roxborough, pausing to unsuccessfully look for Red-rumped Woodpecker although a Broad-winged Hawk was flushed from the trees as we searched. The remainder of the day was spent relaxing around the hotel or pottering about the grounds. As always there were plenty of birds to look at including more Black-faced Grassquits, Pale-vented Pigeons and the inevitable Chachalacas. Out at sea, boobies, frigates and tropicbirds were just about visible feeding in the rougher waters beyond Goat Island. Our stay was coming to an end but we had plenty of memories to take home and hundreds of photographs to remind us all of these delightful islands

Day 13

Thursday 24th April

A leisurely morning was spent prior to an early lunch and departure to Crown Point for the return flight to Gatwick. I watched the Hawksbill Turtles for a while as they continued to surface at intervals and some of us took a last look around the trail behind the hotel which produced two Brown-crested Flycatchers, Grey Kingbirds, several White-fringed Antwrens, Ruby Topaz Hummingbird and a fly-over Osprey. Rufous-tailed Jacamars were much in evidence this morning and the Caribbean Martins repeatedly hurtled past rather disconcertingly at head height. I idly wondered what the insurers would make of a claim for having a tropical hirundine surgically removed from your ear! Farewells were also made to the other Speyside birds such as White-tipped Dove, Pale-vented Pigeon, Blue Grey Tanager and of course the beach Turnstones which were last seen demolishing toast and breakfast scraps on the sand.

At 1pm the coach arrived but it was not Adolphus or Gladwyn but a local driver hired for the airport transfer. I was rather dismayed as I had arranged the early pick-up to permit a visit to the Hilton Hotel pools but messages had got scrambled and the driver had a school contract which prevented him doing any more than take us directly to the airport. This was very unfortunate as the international flight was not scheduled to leave until much later in the day but we had little choice but to climb aboard.

Crown Point was already very busy with passengers checking in for various flights all leaving about the same time as ours but fortunately the BA desks were open and we were at least able to get rid of our bags and collect boarding cards. I then set off to try and arrange a taxi to the Hilton but to my surprise came upon Adolphus loading passengers for a short transfer to a nearby resort hotel. The great man was suitably apologetic and launched into a long explanation about the technical problems that had put his coach out of action earlier in the day but I was more interested that he was happy to run us to the Hilton once he had deposited his passengers at the hotel. This he did and half an hour later we escaped the chaos of the airport to visit the Hilton Ponds and Mangroves.

As part of the deal to obtain planning permission the Hilton Hotel had included in their plans a number of pools for the wildlife and these are now among the best places for birdwatching on Tobago. We paid only a cursory look at these however and made our way straight to the wooden boardwalks giving access to a superb tract of mangrove bordering a wide lagoon. It was not an ideal time for bird behaviour and the hoped for Mangrove Cuckoos did not appear but we enjoyed the quick visit and did see a fine Yellow-breasted Flycatcher along with Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Scrub Greenlets and a Chivi Vireo. As we returned to the airport, five or six Anhingas were at the edge of the ponds, a Great Egret was stalking at the waters edge and an Osprey perched in a dead tree overlooking the water.

Back at Crown Point we had a long, hot wait until the delayed departure of our flight but gradually the crowded departure hall thinned as the other flights boarded. An overnight flight is never a particularly enjoyable experience but after a brief stop in Barbados to pick up numbers of very pink holidaymakers, we sped smoothly across the Atlantic and reached Gatwick more or less on time after a flight time of 6 hours and 45 minutes from Barbados boosted by strong tail winds. I thought it had been a great tour and would like to thank everyone for your patience and good humour. I hope to see you all again one day. The above report is inevitably a subjective account so please accept my apologies for any omissions or inaccuracies!!!

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

Naturetrek Facebook

Many participants of Naturetrek tours like to remain in touch after the holiday, to share photos, comments and future travel plans. Until now we've provided no suitable platform for post-tour networking. Now, though, we're delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page.

The Naturetrek Facebook page is now live: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Naturetrek-Wildlife-Holidays/9765181485>. Setting up a personal profile at www.facebook.com is quick, free and easy. Do please pay us a visit!

Species List

Birds

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | Little Tinamou <i>Crypturellus soui</i> | Heard several days at AWC |
| 2 | Least Grebe <i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i> | c12+ Bon Accord Tobago |
| 3 | Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon aethereus</i> | Offshore from Blue Waters & many Little Tobago island where several nests seen with young. |
| 4 | Brown Booby <i>Sula leucocaster</i> | Offshore from Blue Waters & many Little Tobago Island + nests |
| 5 | Red-footed Booby <i>Sula. sula</i> | 20+ Little Tobago Island inc. several nesting birds + juveniles |
| 6 | Brown Pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i> (4) | Small numbers offshore from coastal points on Trinidad with larger numbers Waterloo- Seen Tobago in small numbers |
| 7 | Neotropic Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax brasiliannu</i> | Unusually only one noted Waterloo |
| 8 | Anhinga <i>Anhinga anhinga</i> | One Caroni, 12+ Bon Accord Tobago |
| 9 | Magnificent Frigatebird <i>Fregata magnificens</i> (7) | c10 Blanchisseuse, locally numerous Tobago especially Little Tobago Island, Bloody Bay & offshore from Blue Waters |
| 10 | Cocoi Heron <i>Ardea cocoi</i> | Adult ARS Wallerfield |
| 11 | Great Egret <i>Egretta alba</i> (3) | Scattering on Trinidad wetlands with 1-2 Nariva, Waterloo & Caroni, one Bon Accord Tobago |
| 12 | Snowy Egret <i>Egretta. thula</i> (2) | Nariva, Waterloo & Trincity/Caroni on Trinidad & Bon Accord Tobago |
| 13 | Little Blue Heron <i>Egretta. caerulea</i> (3) | Wallerfield, Nariva, Waterloo, Trincity & Caroni on Trinidad |
| 14 | Tricoloured Heron <i>Eretta. tricolor</i> (2) | 1-2 Waterloo, Caroni (numbers at dusk) on Trinidad |
| 15 | Cattle Egret <i>Bulbulcus ibis</i> (8) | Common in lowlands |
| 16 | Green Heron <i>Butorides virecens</i> | 3+ Bon Accord/Hilton Ponds Tobago, 1 Speyside |
| 17 | Striated Heron <i>Butorides. striatus</i> (2) | 5-6 birds Trinidad, Nariva/Trincity |
| 18 | Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>) | 5+ Waterloo |
| 19 | Yellow-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax. violacea</i> | Many Caroni, more on Tobago with 5+ Bon Accord and one daily Blue Waters |
| 20 | Scarlet Ibis <i>Eudocimus ruber</i> | 500+ Caroni Swamp |
| 21 | Black Vulture <i>Coragyps atratus</i> (6) | Very Common Trinidad |
| 22 | Turkey Vulture <i>Cathartes aura</i> (5) | Locally numerous Trinidad |
| 23 | White-cheeked Pintail <i>Anas bahamensis</i> | 10+ Bon Accord Tobago |
| 24 | Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> | Trincity & Caroni |
| 25 | Swallow-tailed Kite <i>Elanoides forficatus</i> | 3+ Arima Valley |
| 26 | Plumbeous Kite <i>Ictinia plumbea</i> (5) | Blanchisseuse Road, Arena & en route Matura Beach |
| 27 | Long-winged Harrier <i>Circus biffoni</i> | Male Caroni Rice-fields |
| 28 | White Hawk <i>Leucopternis albicollis</i> (2) | 1-3 Arima Valley |
| 29 | Common Black Hawk <i>Buteogallus anthracinus</i> (6) | Regular Arima Valley |
| 30 | Great Black Hawk <i>Buteogallus. urubitinga</i> | Two over Tobago Rain Forest |

31	Savannah Hawk <i>Buteogallus meridionalis</i>	Several Wallerfield (ARS) & one north of Nariva
32	Broad-winged Hawk <i>Buteo platyperus</i>	1-200 Bon Accord Tobago, a few singles elsewhere
33	Zone-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo albonotatus</i>	Singles Nariva & Wallerfield
34	Ornate Hawk Eagle <i>Spizaetus ornatus</i>	Adult Arima Valley
35	Yellow-headed Caracara <i>Milvago chimachima</i> (3)	Several around lowlands (Wallerfield & Nariva also one Bon Accord Tobago
36	Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	Singles Arima Valley
37	Peregrine <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	One flew over Blue Waters Tobago
38	Rufous-vented Chachalaca <i>Ortalis ruficauda</i>	Widespread and locally common Tobago
39	Trinidad Piping-Guan <i>Pipile pipile</i>	One Morne Bleu
40	Purple Gallinule <i>Porphyryla martinica</i>	One very briefly Trincity Ponds
41	Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Several Trincity Ponds & c10 Bon Accord
42	Limpkin <i>Aramus guaranauna</i>	Three near Nariva
43	Southern Lapwing <i>Vanellus chilensis</i> (6)	Locally numerous in Trinidad lowlands- several Tobago
44	Semi-palmated Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	20+ Waterloo- a few Caroni
45	Wattled Jacana <i>Jacana jacana</i> (3)	Fairly numerous Nariva, also Wallerfield, Trincity Ponds & Bon Accord Tobago
46	Black-necked Stilt <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	One Waterloo
47	Greater Yellowlegs <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	Several Waterloo & Bon Accord Tobago
48	Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa. flavipeps</i>	Several Waterloo & Bon Accord Tobago
49	Solitary Sandpiper <i>Tringa. solitaria</i>	Two ARS Wallerfield & c3 Bon Accord Tobago
50	Willet <i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>	10+ Waterloo
51	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularia</i> (5)	Ones and twos at a number of localities (7+ Blanchisseuse)
52	Hudsonian Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	5+ Waterloo, one Bon Accord Tobago
53	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> (5)	Waterloo but also up to 20 daily Blue Waters
54	Semi-palmated Sandpiper <i>Calidris pusilla</i>	Several Waterloo
55	Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	Several Waterloo
56	Least Sandpiper <i>Calidris minutilla</i>	Several at ARS Wallerfield
57	Short-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus griseus</i>	At least one Waterloo
58	Laughing Gull <i>Larus atricilla</i> (4)	Common at Waterloo and around Tobago coast
59	Royal Tern <i>Sterna. maxima</i>	20+ Waterloo
60	Yellow-billed Tern <i>Sterna. superciliaris</i>	A small flock flew over Waterloo
61	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Two amongst other terns at Waterloo
62	Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	c25 Mount Irvine Bay Tobago
63	Sooty Tern <i>Sterna fuscata</i>	5-6 flew by at sea Little Tobago
64	Large-billed Tern <i>Phaetusa simple</i>	30-40 Waterloo
65	Black Skimmer <i>Rynchops niger</i>	c.200+ Waterloo
66	Brown Noddy <i>Anous stolidus</i>	6+ Little Tobago
67	Feral Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	Common
68	Pale-vented Pigeon <i>Columba cayennensis</i>	Numerous & widespread Tobago
69	Scaled Pigeon <i>Columba. specios</i> (4)	Blanchisseuse Road and Arima Valley (6-7 birds)
70	Eared Dove <i>Zenaida auriculata</i>	Numerous in south of Tobago & Caroni

71	Common Ground Dove <i>Columbina passerine</i>	5-6 Aripo Forest area
72	Ruddy Ground-Dove <i>Columbina talpacoti</i> (8)	Widespread & numerous
73	White-tipped Dove <i>Leptotila verreauxi</i> (5)	One or two AWC, numerous throughout Tobago
74	Grey-fronted Dove <i>Leptotila. rufaxilla</i>	Several daily AWC
75	Red-bellied Macaw <i>Ara manilata</i>	40+ Wallerfield Moriche area
76	Green-rumped Parrotlet <i>Forpus passerinus</i> (3)	c4 Wallerfield ARS, Tobago at Bon Accord & along coast
77	Lilac-tailed Parrotlet <i>Touit batavica</i>	A few at AWC on first afternoon
78	Blue-headed Parrot <i>Pionus menstruus</i>	12+ Blanchisseuse Road,
79	Orange-winged Parrot <i>Amazona amazonica</i> (11)	Widespread and numerous in forested areas on both islands
80	Squirrel Cuckoo <i>Piaya cayana</i>	One AWC & one Arena
81	Smooth-billed Ani <i>Crotophaga ani</i> (8)	Numerous in cultivated or grassy areas on both islands
82	(Tropical Screech Owl <i>Otus choliba</i>	One heard Wallerfield)
83	Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl <i>Glaucidium brasilianum</i>	Heard most nights at AWC and during day at several other places. Seen on one occasion in Arima Valley
84	Common Pauraque <i>Nyctidromus albicollis</i>	Seen during night-birding at Wallerfield
85	White-tailed Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus cayennensis</i>	Several at Wallerfield during night-birding, a memorable pair on Little Tobago Island
86	Common Potoo <i>Nyctibius griseus</i>	One Caroni Swamp
87	Oilbird <i>Steatornis caripensis</i>	Dunstan Cave colony viewed during stay at AWC
88	White-collared Swift <i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i>	One over Morne Bleu
89	Short-tailed Swift <i>Chaetura brachyura</i> (5)	Locally numerous both islands but usually near coasts
90	Band-rumped Swift <i>Chaetura. spinicauda</i> (4)	Several identified among commoner Grey-rumped at AWC & Arima Valley
91	Grey-rumped Swift <i>Chaetura. cinereiventris</i> (7)	Commonest swift Trinidad and also Tobago Rain Forest
92	Fork-tailed Palm Swift <i>Reinarda squamata</i>	Wallerfield
93	Rufous-breasted Hermit <i>Glaucis hirsuta</i> (9)	Seen several times AWC(Dunstan Cave) & Blanchisseuse Road but more numerous Tobago Rain Forest
94	Green Hermit <i>Phaethornis guy</i>	Singles at AWC only seen by PAD
95	Little Hermit <i>Phaethornis. longuenareus</i>	Seen several times at AWC and also Blanchisseuse
96	White-tailed Sabrewing <i>Campylopterus ensipennis</i>	c10Tobago Rain Forest
97	White-necked Jacobin <i>Florisuga melivora</i> (8)	A common resident at AWC, a few elsewhere in Northern Range also one Tobago Rain Forest.
98	Green-throated Mango <i>Anthracothorax viridigula</i>	Three Caroni Swamp
99	Black-throated Mango <i>Anthracothorax. nigricollis</i> (8)	A few daily at AWC and a few sightings elsewhere one or two Tobago
100	Ruby Topaz <i>Chrysolampis mosquitus</i> (7)	Several at Wallerfield inc. nest, seen daily Tobago

101	Tufted Coquette <i>Lophornis ornata</i> (7)	Females seen daily at AWC & male on several occasions
102	Blue-chinned Sapphire <i>Chlorestes notatus</i> (4)	One or two sporadically at AWC
103	White-chested Emerald <i>Amazilia chionopectus</i> (7)	Small numbers at AWC, some noted elsewhere (Wallerfield)
104	Copper-rumped Hummingbird <i>Amazilia tobaci</i> (10)	Widespread on both islands
105	White-tailed Trogon <i>Trogon viridis</i>	Four singles Blanchisseuse Road, AWC & Arena
106	Violaceous Trogon <i>Trogon violaceus</i> (3)	AWC & Arena Forest
107	Collared Trogon <i>Trogon collaris</i>	Pair AWC, two Tobago Rainforest
108	Blue-crowned Motmot <i>Momotus momota</i> (11)	Regularly seen at AWC, widespread and seen daily Tobago at Blue Waters, Rainforest etc.
109	Belted Kingfisher <i>Megasceryle alcyon</i>	One Bon Accord and Blue Waters
110	Green Kingfisher <i>Chloroceryle americana</i> (2)	Blanchisseuse & Caroni
111	Rufous-tailed Jacamar <i>Balbula ruficauda</i> (6)	Blanchisseuse Road, Tobago Rain Forest & roadside in Tobago
112	Channel-billed Toucan <i>Ramphastos vitellinus</i> (7)	4-5 AWC grounds & Morne Bleu
113	Red-crowned Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes rubricapillus</i>	Bon Accord and another 3-4 Tobago
114	Golden-olive Woodpecker <i>Picus rubiginosus</i> (6)	Several AWC, also 5+Tobago Rain Forest
115	Chestnut Woodpecker <i>Celex elegans</i>	One AWC grounds
116	Lineated Woodpecker <i>Dryocopus lineatus</i> (3)	Three singles AWC
117	Stripe-breasted Spinetail <i>Synallaxis cinnamomea</i>	Heard AWC then several Tobago Rain Forest
118	Yellow-chinned Spinetail <i>Certhiaxis cinnamomeus</i>	ARS, Nariva & Trincity Ponds
119	Streaked Xenops <i>Xenops rutilans</i>	Two Arima Valley
120	Grey-throated Leaf-tosser <i>Sclerurus albigularis</i>	One Blanchisseuse Road
121	Plain Brown Woodcreeper <i>Dendrocincla fuliginosa</i> (4)	Singles AWC, several Tobago Rain Forest
122	Straight-billed Woodcreeper <i>Xiphorhynchus pica</i>	One Caroni Swamp
123	Streaked Headed Woodcreeper <i>Lepidocolaptes souleyeti</i>	One Wallerfield (Aripo)
124	Cocoa Woodcreeper (<i>Xiphorhynchus susurrans</i>) (4)	Heard more than seen but good views of birds on both islands
125	Great Ant-Shrike <i>Taraba major</i> (5)	Daily at AWC where often around bird tables
126	Black-crested Ant-Shrike <i>Sakesphorus canadensis</i> (2)	Seen at Nariva & Wallerfield
127	Barred Ant-Shrike <i>Thamnophilus doliatus</i> (5)	Daily at AWC and 1-2 Wallerfield, Several Tobago esp. Blue Waters area
128	Plain Ant-Vireo <i>Dysithamnus mentalis</i>	Two pairs Tobago Rainforest
129	White-fringed Ant-Wren <i>Formicivora grisea</i> (3)	5-6 birds Tobago (Blue Waters/Grafton)
130	White-bellied Antbird <i>Myrmeciza longipes</i>	Male glimpsed Arena Forest
131	Silvered Antbird <i>Sclateria naevia</i>	Pair Blanchisseuse

132	Black-faced Ant-Thrush <i>Formicarius analis</i>	Heard at several places, 2-3 seen AWC
133	Southern Beardless Tyrannulet <i>Camptostoma obsoletum</i>	Arima Valley & Wallerfield
134	Forest Elaenia <i>Myiopagis gaimardii</i>	One AWC
135	Yellow-bellied Elaenia <i>Elaenia flavogaster</i>	Fairly numerous Wallerfield; seen daily Tobago mostly around Blue Waters
136	Ochre-bellied Flycatcher <i>Mionectes oleaginosa</i>	One AWC & one Tobago Rainforest
137	Slaty-capped Flycatcher <i>Leptopogon superciliaris</i>	One Monte Bleu
138	Yellow-breasted Flycatcher <i>Tolmomyias flaviventris</i>	Singles Wallerfield Aripo & Hilton Mangroves
139	Euler's Flycatcher <i>Latbrotriccus euleri</i>	One AWC Bellbird Trail
140	Fuscous Flycatcher <i>Cnemotriccus fuscatus</i>	Several Tobago Rainforest
141	Tropical Pewee <i>Contopus cinereus</i>	Two singles Trinidad
142	Pied Water-Tyrant <i>Fluvicola pica</i>	Fairly numerous in Trinidad lowlands near water
143	White-headed Marsh-Tyrant <i>Arundinicola leucocephala</i>	ditto
144	Fork-tailed Flycatcher <i>Tyrannus savanna</i>	c10+ ARS Wallerfield
145	Brown-crested Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i>	Single Nariva; 4-5+ Tobago
146	Great Kiskadee <i>Pitangus sulphuratus</i> (9)	Common AWC & widespread Trinidad
147	Boat-billed Flycatcher <i>Megarhynchus pitangua</i>	Pair Blanchisseuse Road & 1-2 AWC
148	Streaked Flycatcher <i>Myiodynastes maculatus</i> (5)	Up to 4+ AWC also seen Blanchisseuse Road & Tobago Rainforest
149	Piratic Flycatcher <i>Legatus leucophalus</i> (4)	AWC & Arima Valley
150	Sulphury Flycatcher <i>Tyrannopsis sulphurea</i>	4+ seen very well Wallerfield
151	Tropical Kingbird <i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i> (9)	Locally numerous Trinidad, 4-5 Tobago
152	Grey Kingbird <i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i>	Single ARS Wallerfield, 4-6 birds Tobago
153	White-winged Becard <i>Pachyrhamphus polychopterus</i>	Male Wallerfield (Aripo) & Morne Bleu
154	Black-tailed Tityra <i>Tityra cayana</i> (4)	Two or three AWC
155	Bearded Bellbird <i>Procnias averano</i>	Heard daily at AWC and seen very well
156	White-bearded Manakin <i>Manacus manacus</i>	Seen daily at AWC, also seen at Wallerfield
157	Blue-backed Manakin <i>Chiroxiphia pareola</i>	Nice views Tobago Rain Forest & Grafton
158	Golden-headed Manakin <i>Pipra erythrocephala</i>	Seen well AWC-up to 10+ lekking, also Aripo Forest
159	Scrub Greenlet <i>Hylophilus flavipes</i>	5-6 seen Tobago (Hilton Ponds & Blue Waters area)
160	Golden-fronted Greenlet <i>Hylophilus aurantifrons</i>	Seen a few times at AWC
161	Rufous-browed Peppershrike <i>Cyclarhis gujanensis</i>	Singles AWC and Wallerfield
162	Chivi Vireo <i>Vireo chivi</i> (4)	Aripo Forest, Gilpin Trace & Blue Waters
163	Caribbean Martin <i>Progne dominicensis</i>	Numerous Tobago
164	Grey-breasted Martin <i>Progne chalybea</i> (6)	Fairly numerous lowland Trinidad & Northern Hills
165	White-winged Swallow <i>Tachycineta albiventer</i> (5)	Numerous lowland Trinidad (ARS-Trinity)

166	Southern Rough-Wing Swallow <i>Stelgidopteryx ruficollis</i> (4)	20+ birds Trinidad
167	Rufous-breasted Wren <i>Thryothorus rutilus</i> (7)	6+ both islands (mostly AWC & Gilpin Trace)
168	House Wren <i>Troglodytes aedon</i> (9)	Regular daily at AWC, a few Speyside/Blue Waters & Rainforest edge Tobago
169	Long-billed Gnatwren <i>Ramphocaenus melanurus</i>	One AWC
170	Yellow-legged Thrush <i>Turdus flavipes</i>	5-6+ Tobago Rain Forest
171	Cocoa Thrush <i>Turdus fumigatus</i> (7)	Numerous Trinidad
172	Bare-eyed Thrush <i>Turdus nudigenis</i> (8)	Fairly numerous AWC, small numbers Tobago
173	White-necked Thrush <i>Turdus albicollis</i> (4)	Several AWC- fairly numerous Tobago Rain Forest
174	Tropical Mockingbird <i>Mimus gilvus</i> (12)	Fairly numerous both islands
175	Tropical Parula <i>Parula pitaiayumi</i>	One seen AWC (PAD only)
176	Northern Waterthrush <i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>	Two singles AWC (heard Caroni)
177	Masked Yellowthroat <i>Geothlypis aequinoctialis</i>	Male Wallerfield
178	Bananaquit <i>Coereba flaveola</i> (11)	Abundant-both islands
179	Bicoloured Conebill <i>Conirostrum bicolor</i>	3-4 Caroni Swamp
180	White-lined Tanager <i>Tachyphonus rufus</i> (11)	Numerous both islands
181	Red-crowned Ant-Tanager <i>Habia rubica</i>	Male or pair Oilbird trail
182	Silver-beaked Tanager <i>Ramphocelus carbo</i>	Common AWC
183	Swallow Tanager <i>Tersina viridis</i>	Male Blanchisseuse Road
184	Blue-Grey Tanager <i>Thraupis episcopus</i> (11)	Common AWC also numbers seen elsewhere in Trinidad and on Tobago
185	Palm Tanager <i>Thraupis palmarum</i> (11)	Common both islands
186	Violaceous Euphonia <i>Euphonia violacea</i> (6)	Fairly numerous AWC
187	Trinidad Euphonia <i>Euphonia trinitatis</i>	Pair Arima Valley
188	Speckled Tanager <i>Tangara guttata</i>	1-2 Monte Bleu area –not seen by all
189	Turquoise Tanager <i>Tangara mexicana</i> (4)	Small numbers AWC
190	Bay-headed Tanager <i>Tangara gyrola</i> (5)	Small numbers AWC
191	Blue Dacnis <i>Dacnis cayana</i>	A pair AWC & also Arena Forest
192	Green Honeycreeper <i>Chlorophanes spiza</i> (7)	Seen daily at AWC-also elsewhere on Trinidad
193	Purple Honeycreeper <i>Cyanerpes caeruleus</i> (7)	Numerous at AWC feeders
194	Red-legged Honeycreeper <i>Cyanerpes cyaneus</i>	Two Males one female at AWC feeders, 12+ Tobago Rain Forest
195	Blue-Black Grassquit <i>Volatinia jacarin</i> (4)	Locally numerous Trinidad lowlands also Arima Valley
196	Black-faced Grassquit <i>Tiaris bicolor</i>	5-6 Tobago (Blue Waters/Speyside)
197	Grassland Yellow Finch <i>Sicalis luteola</i>	20+ ARS Wallerfield
198	Ruddy-breasted Seedeater <i>Sporophila minuta</i>	Several ARS Wallerfield
199	Red-capped Cardinal <i>Paroaria gularis</i>	In flight only at Caroni
200	Greyish Saltator <i>Saltator coerulescens</i>	Singing AWC & Wallerfield
201	Red-breasted Blackbird <i>Sturnella militaris</i>	Wallerfield area
202	Yellow-hooded Blackbird <i>Agelaius</i>	Trincity Ponds, Nariva & Caroni

icterocephalus

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 203 | Carib Grackle <i>Quiscalus lugubris</i> | Numerous around Trinidad coast & south Tobago |
| 204 | Shiny Cowbird <i>Molothrus bonariensis</i> (8) | Locally in small numbers both islands |
| 205 | Yellow Oriole <i>Icterus nigrogularis</i> (5) | A few AWC - also Wallerfield |
| 206 | Yellow-rumped Cacique <i>Cacicus cela</i> | Colony Comuto also along Blanchisseuse Road |
| 207 | Crested Oropendola <i>Psarocolius decumanus</i>
(10) | Numerous AWC, seen elsewhere in Trinidad & in small numbers Tobago Rain Forest & Little Tobago |

Non avian

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Red-rumped Agouti | Red-tailed (Trinidad) Squirrel |
| Red Howler Monkey | Silky Ant-eater |
| Opossum | White-lined Sac-wing Bat |
| Golden Tegu Lizard | Cook's Tree Boa (Caroni) |
| Fer de Lance | Machette Snake |
| Spectacled Caimen | Leatherback Turtle (Matura) |
| Hawksbill Turtle (Blue Waters) | Analeps (Four-eyed) Fish Caroni |
| Land Crab spp | Fiddler Crab spp |