

# THE TRAVELLING NATURALIST

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## TRINIDAD & TOBAGO The Asa Wright Experience 11 – 23 February 2016

### TOUR REPORT

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With many of the South American bird families represented, Trinidad & Tobago makes for a great introductory and convenient pocket-sized starter-pack of South American birding. Trinidad's Asa Wright Nature Centre is part of global birding lore, an experience never forgotten. This, followed by a few relaxing days at Blue Waters Inn on Tobago, made for a great visit to 'T&T'. We were blessed with good weather throughout, nice and warm and a welcome break from winter back home in UK.

Here are a few selected highlights:

- Veranda sessions - the abundance of colourful birds at Asa Wright
- That neon Ruby Topaz
- The diminutive Tufted Coquette
- The sheer exuberance of all those hummingbirds
- Those iridescent Rufous-tailed Jacamars
- That lucky, lucky find - Trinidad Piping Guan
- Those lekking White-bearded Manakins
- That superb dark morph Long-winged Harrier at Nariva Swamp
- Those graceful Red-billed Tropicbirds on Little Tobago
- All those Trinidad Motmots on Tobago – everyone loves a motmot.
- And surely, the hard to beat Scarlet Ibis finale at Caroni Swamp

### **Day 1: Thursday 11 February**

We departed London Gatwick on time and 12 hours later we were at Port of Spain, Trinidad, having spent an hour on the tarmac in St Lucia. We were met by David Ramlal, part of the Ramlal dynasty of birding guides in Trinidad, plus Dave our other driver, and staff from Asa Wright Nature Centre. We were whisked off through the downtown traffic before turning off on to the rainforest-edged road that climbs the Northern Range to Asa Wright Nature Centre, our base for the next seven nights.

On arrival we were welcomed by Centre staff, furnished with a snifter of their rum punch, allocated our rooms, settled in, then dined. It had been a long day so after dinner we retired promptly, to sleep if we could, full of portent of what the morning would reveal.

### **Day 2: Friday 12 February**

Our first morning at Asa Wright. We were all up and at it early, on the much-fabled veranda, coffee in hand, eagerly awaiting the dawn and the unfolding spectacle it would bring, for which the centre is renowned. As the darkness began to lift, the night shift ended. Common long-tongued bats took a last slurp from the sugar syrup feeders before giving way to the day shift as the first hummingbirds began to arrive. Desperate for their first sugar shot of the day, they buzzed the feeders frantically, a mix of copper-rumped hummingbirds, white-chested emeralds, white-necked jacobins, black-throated mangos, blue-chinned sapphires, both rufous-breasted & green hermits and a long-billed starthroat.

Birds apart, we marvelled at the superb vista, looking out from the veranda across the rainforest below us and the surrounding forested slopes, an array of tones of green punctuated throughout with the bright orange of flowering immortelle trees. Before long the riot of colour of the hummer-fest was enhanced further by the arrival of both purple and green honeycreepers, violaceous euphonias, bananaquits and several species of tanager; the beautiful powder-blue blue-grey, the plush velvety silver-beaked, the dimorphic white-lined and the underrated, subtle olive-and-black palm tanagers. Added to this were both spectacled and cocoa thrushes, tropical mockingbirds and tufted coquettes feeding within feet of us, with turquoise and bay-headed tanagers in the background, plus fly-by orange-winged parrots and crested oropendolas. It all made for such thrilling frenzied viewing that when the breakfast bell rang it was hard to tear ourselves away.

After breakfast, David, our guide for the week ahead, took us down the Discovery Trail below the veranda. No sooner had we set off than we found a ruby topaz hummingbird feeding alongside a tufted coquette, quite a combo to see them close together, clearly rivals in the glamour stakes. There was much to see and as we became strung out along the trail those of us at the back saw two white-faced capuchin monkeys. Our mention of this was met with disbelief and friendly derision – they just don't occur here. Oh, but they do! Further down the trail, we saw them again and this time by David and his father Roodal, and confirmed as an Asa Wright 'first', found by us – back of the net!

Further along the trail we found a very obliging male Guianan trogon which perched for prolonged 'scope views for all. A black hawk-eagle hove in to view above us accompanied by a grey-lined hawk. Meanwhile, bearded bellbirds belted out their strident anvil-striking '*bonk, bonk, bonk*' sound, enticingly ahead of us. Eventually we found them and in a 'scope-able position. Down here too, we saw white-bearded manakins (but not lekking), Euler's flycatcher, white-lined sac-winged bats and red-rumped agoutis.

We returned to the veranda both before and again after lunch, to indulge ourselves further in the birds there, where there's always something new to see. This time we added yellow orioles, red-legged honeycreepers, the electric-blue blue dacnis and the more sombre scaled pigeon. At 2.30pm there was an almighty downpour that, from the shelter of the veranda outlook, was fun to experience. It's rainforest, after all. The hummingbirds in particular took advantage of the torrential rain and appeared to revel in the chance to bathe and shimmy in the shower. Even the aggressive jacobins put aside their differences and we had the curious sight of seven of them on the same branch all performing their ablutions.

At 3pm we went for a walk along the Centre driveway. Here we found ochre-bellied flycatchers, and spied nesting orange-winged parrots in holes in a dead tree, while crested oropendolas flew back and forth. A second heavy shower soon sent us scurrying back to the veranda. After dinner, some of us went on a night walk, back along the driveway. We found a roosting ball of feathers, that turned out to be a northern waterthrush, saw some land crabs, a tarantula, a whip-scorpion, a cave cricket and a stick insect. Oh, and the stars above us in the jet black night sky, plus the sound of cicadas made it all the more magical.

### **Day 3: Saturday 13 February**

Pre-breakfast we were on the veranda again enjoying the by now familiar birds and their antics, including those white-necked jacobins displaying, spreading their white tails, appearing translucent in the bright early morning sunshine. After breakfast David and Dave collected us and we set off up and over the Northern Range on the Blanchisseuse Road, snaking its way through the rainforest. Along the way, I was keen that we try for the *Pawi*, the scarce Trinidad piping guan, Trinidad's national bird, which used to be seen in an area that we would pass. David said they'd not been seen there for quite some time now, several years in fact, but agreed that as we were passing, we might as well give it a shot, a long-shot. In hope, we drove up to the telecommunication scatter station at Morne Bleu. As we stood about birding, David went in search back down the track. To our amazement he called to us, beckoning that we follow. And lo, there it was, a Pawi sat in a tree. How lucky were we! This big black bird walked slowly along branches, reminding me of a cock capercaillie back home, staying put long enough for us all to see it and to 'scope it. Our sighting of this scarce, hard-to-see bird was the talk of Asa Wright for the rest of the week. Oh how we basked.

This good luck continued, we were on a roll now. Next, we had a bit of a trogon-fest, finding first two collared trogons soon followed by two green-backed trogons. At Las Lapis Trace we hit a purple patch too. With an ant swarm below us in the forest somewhere, all sorts of birds had been attracted to this. In a busy half-hour or so we found red-crowned ant tanagers, both cocoa and plain-brown woodcreepers, a pair of chestnut woodpeckers, a plain antvireo and a black-faced antthrush which took some picking out amongst the deep leaf litter. Here too we saw both dusky-capped and boat-billed flycatchers, streaked xenops, golden-fronted greenlet and golden-headed manakin. Phew! Pressing on, we stopped briefly for speckled tanagers and then that fabulous broad-winged hawk perched on a pole eating a land crab. We lunched at Brasso Seco where we picked up our first shiny cowbirds, yellow-rumped caciques and a tropical kingbird at last, a common species that had eluded us so far.

After lunch we birded for a while around Brasso Seco, picking up our first ruddy ground doves, blue-black grassquits and a tropical pewee. Best though by far, surely, was that magnificent pair of courting rufous-tailed jacamars, he presenting her with an offering of prey. Perched in direct sunlight, their iridescent bronzy, golden-green plumage glistened like burnished gold. Absolutely thrilling or what! We moved on towards Morne La Croix. In roadside flowering immortal trees we found an olive-sided flycatcher, red-legged honeycreepers, blue dacnis and an American redstart. A ferruginous pygmy owl was fleetingly seen and then at Morne La Croix itself we saw that nesting colony of yellow-rumped caciques and those three cute blue-headed parrots perched on wires. Before long it was time to head for home, which we did fairly directly, stopping just the once to see white-bellied antbird which David heard as we drove along.

### **Day 4: Sunday 14 February**

Pre-breakfast, we meet briefly on the veranda but decided to go for a stroll along the centre driveway. We didn't see that much but nevertheless it was great to listen to the sounds of the forest waking, the departing nightshift –with ferruginous pygmy, mottled and spectacled owls all heard, replaced by the day shift – great kiskadees, tropical mockingbirds and house wrens bursting into song. After breakfast we had an appointment with oilbirds. Centre guide Natalie escorted us down the trail to Dunstan's Cave, the daytime grotto home of these weirdo birds of the night. On the way there we saw our first red-legged honeycreeper, and a common black hawk flew over. At the cave entrance we could hear the eerie raucous cries of the oilbirds within, and took it in turns to cross the stream to peer into the gloom of the cave at these, such bizarre yet completely fascinating, birds. We were back at the centre by late morning and spent the time before lunch standing in the open in the car park to watch for raptors mainly passing overhead,

but anything else too. We saw three common black hawks, a short-tailed hawk, an osprey crossing the Northern Range from coast to coast and so too, two magnificent frigatebirds.

After lunch, it being very hot, we took a little downtime. By that I mean the default, to simply sit and wonder at the hive of bird activity from the veranda - entertained by the ruby topaz and tufted coquette hummers. At 4pm we left the centre destined for some late afternoon birding at Wallerfield and then later on to the Aripo Cattle Station for some night-birding. On entering the E-Tech construction site of a new University of T&T, we drove past - it felt like running the gauntlet - through swathes of sinister-looking Black Vultures, the bin men of the Tropics. At a relic stand of the now scarce Moriche Palm habitat, in quick succession we saw what we went there for, four species specifically associated with the palms; Sulphury Flycatchers, Neotropical Palm Swifts, Red-bellied Macaws and Moriche Orioles, the last being the second rarest bird on Trinidad (the rarest being the never-seen Scaled Antpitta). And what views we had of the orioles, two of them, collecting nest materials and posing for close-'scoping and photographs.

With these four target species in the bag, we headed for Aripo. As we left E-Tech a flock of ten short-tailed swifts zipped overhead. At Aripo, towards dusk, we partook of our *al fresco* evening picnic meal as a zone-tailed hawk flew over us, grey-breasted martins perched on wires above us, a merlin perched in a nearby tree and fireflies winked at us from the pastures. Most bizarre of all though was standing with a plate of food in one hand, and binoculars in the other, looking at a roosting tropical screech owl. As the grey-dark descended we set off through the Cattle Station, driving slowly using spot-lamps to search for night-birds. In the beams we picked out noisy southern lapwings along the road, passed a muddy waterhole of wallowing water buffalo with cattle egrets roosting on their backs, paraques in the vehicle headlamps or picked out on roadside posts with the lamps. By sweeping the beams across the pastures we picked up the orange eye-shine of three common potoos on posts, staying put whilst we set up the 'scope to view them. Similar to the oilbirds, they are another weird family of birds and creatures of the night.

#### **Day 5: Monday 15 February**

Pre-breakfast, we were on the veranda again to enjoy further the array of hummers, honeycreepers and tanagers - the now usual suspects. In addition though were two fly-by white hawks, two fly-by common black hawks, two channel-billed toucans 'scoped perched and two grey-fronted doves. After breakfast we set off, ultimately for Nariva Swamp, but stopping almost immediately on the centre driveway to look for birds heard from the vehicle as we drove. The stop proved fruitful with our first white-flanked antwrens, great views of red-crowned ant tanagers and two Trinidad motmots which proved tricky at first but were eventually 'scoped and some of you got good pictures too. Motmots can look so malevolent, perched in the gloom of the forest understorey. We had a long day ahead, so pressed on, stopping first at Aripo Cattle Station, where we'd been last night in the darkness, night-birding. By day, there was much to see. The pastureland held wattled jacanas, red-breasted blackbirds, pied water tyrant, white-headed marsh tyrant, yellow-chinned spinetail, Carib grackle, grassland yellow finch and blue-black grassquit. In the damper areas and the water buffalo wallow, we found spotted, solitary and least sandpipers plus southern lapwing. Raptors here included our first savannah hawk and a Yellow-headed Caracara. Striped Cuckoo was there somewhere calling but it remained unseen. White-winged Swallows flew back and forth and just as we left, four Green-rumped Parrotlets put in an appearance for us. Mind too, we saw those leaf-cutter ants carrying large leaf pieces, looking like the sails of yachts, crossing a water-filled ditch along a stand of fencing barbed wire, acting like a suspension bridge.

Moving on, passing through Sangre Grande we arrived at the beach at Manzanilla for our picnic lunch. As we dined, magnificent frigatebirds hung high in the air above us, brown pelicans fished just off shore whilst Carib grackles waited for any scraps from us. Four-eyed fish were seen in the shallow surf. After lunch, proceeding along the Manzanilla road towards Nariva, we stopped for five black-bellied whistling ducks, a couple of pale-vented pigeons and seven great egrets. At the bridge over the Nariva River we stopped and saw several striated herons and a bicoloured conebill. Further along, we tried for American pygmy kingfisher, but no. We did though find a magnificent pair of green kingfishers perched in brilliant sunshine, each with a beak full of reciprocal courtship-offering fish. At this same spot we also found a pair of black-crested antshrikes, a female silvered antbird, a northern waterthrush and heard a streak-headed

woodcreeper. Not giving up on the pygmy king, we tried another spot and lo, found one this time, perched in the semi-darkness depths of mangroves. Here too we saw little cuckoo and a pair of red-rumped woodpeckers. Nearby at the mouth of the Nariva River we saw more brown pelicans, striated herons and our first snowy egret.

Turning into the Nariva Swamp road, we stopped and found a great blue heron, loads of cattle egrets, wattled jacanas, smooth-billed ani, several great egrets and a yellow-bellied elaenia. We managed to coax a greyish saltator into view too. Further along we found a couple of yellow-hooded blackbirds and glimpsed a white-tailed goldenthrout hummingbird. From an elevated vantage point looking down on the swamp we picked out a cocoi heron, were continued to be tormented by an unseen calling striped cuckoo and were treated to those wonderful, prolonged views of a dark morph long-winged harrier, drifting and wafting back and forth in front and below us, across the top of the reedbed. What a bird!

### **Day 6: Tuesday 16 February**

We were off site for a half-day today, down to the Aripo savanna area, then back to AWNC for lunch, though not before our regular pre-breakfast veranda *sesh*. The usual suspects were all there, nothing new on this occasion, but nothing to tire of either. Once on our way, we made a few stops on the road down, managing to catch up with and get good views of another green-backed trogon, plus a grey-throated leaf-tosser and a southern beardless tyrannulet which were new for us. Further down, at a grassland area adjacent to forest we found us a masked yellowthroat and managed to call in several Trinidad euphonias, both males and females. A zone-tailed hawk passed over us.

At Aripo, a minor road that seemed to double-up as a municipal rubbish dump nevertheless proved productive for birds. Here we saw our first long-billed gnatwren and a bran-coloured flycatcher. Also here were streaked xenops, little hermit and ruby topaz together and a rufous-browed peppershrike, only heard, again! Further along, acting on a tip-off from another birding group at AWNC we located a nesting pair of pearl kites. We could see the female incubating on her nest and the male made a few fly-by passes. Here too were grey kingbird and posing nicely, a striped cuckoo at last, which we'd only heard all week so far. It was soon time to head back, but we made stops on the way back up too. This time involving much neck-craning and spine-flexing, finding another southern beardless tyrannulet and a tropical parula way up in the forest canopy.

After lunch back at AWNC we spent time on the veranda, some went for a wander along the driveway, others ventured down the Discovery Trail. From the veranda, a pair of lineated woodpeckers were seen, followed by a golden-olive woodpecker, ochre-bellied flycatcher and both bay-headed and turquoise tanagers. Channel-billed toucans and bearded bellbirds were 'scoped and two grey-lined hawks drifted over. Never a dull moment on the AWNC veranda. The ruby topaz showed very well for us again too and a straw poll of whether it or the tufted coquette was top hummer, the topaz got it, hands down. As beautiful, florid, flamboyant and coquettish as the coquette is, it just doesn't have that neon switch to flick that the topaz has, able to transform itself from an apparent dull brown hummer, into an incandescent glow of crimson and orange-gold. An absolute stotter!

### **Day 7: Wednesday 17 February**

As a break from our now regular pre-breakfast veranda session, we were prompted by Huw and Brenda to venture down the Discovery Trail. The afternoon before, they had been down there and saw eight white-bearded manakins, displaying at their lek. We'd all missed this on our first morning. We'd seen the birds, but not lekking. So we headed down to try again. As we waited we enjoyed the sounds of the forest waking up, but with no sign of the manakins. As we were about to head back up the trail our patience was eventually rewarded by seeing four males wing-snapping and jumping from twig to twig. Mission accomplished, we headed directly back to the veranda, it's hard not to be there for at least some pre-breakfast birding.

We were off site again today, to the coast. However, on the drive down to Arima from AWNC we made a couple of roadside stops and at one managed to see a ferruginous pygmy owl, at last. Also, an ochre-lore

flatbill (aka yellow-breasted flycatcher), a streaked xenops and a red-legged honeycreeper. We pressed on, initially to Waterloo and then later would make our way to Caroni Swamp. The drive took us through the rice and sugarcane growing areas. Having been lucky enough to see that wonderful dark morph long-winged harrier at Nariva Swamp earlier in the week, we were surprised to see another dark morph bird – it was surely a different one, so far from the first, perched on the ground in a field of sugarcane stubble, its jet black plumage setting off its bright yellow legs. Nice.

At Waterloo the tide was in and full, but no matter as we found the roosting birds, hundreds and hundreds of them, of assorted species. We spent time sifting through the various flocks picking out and identifying an array of waders and gulls. The latter were predominated by laughing gulls, cackling away at us. Amongst them though, we sifted out no less than ten lesser black-backed gulls. black skimmers were roosting close by, giving close-up views of their bizarre beak structure. The flocks of waders included western sandpiper, both semipalmated sandpipers and plovers, willet, least sandpiper, Hudsonian whimbrel, greater yellowlegs and just a short way off a flock of seven black-necked stilts. There were herons here too including Little blue, snowy and great egrets and yellow-crowned night herons. Out in the bay there were brown pelicans, magnificent frigatebirds, an osprey and just the odd tern, a Royal and one large-billed tern.

Relocating to Orange Valley Road, another section of shore, we found the same assemblage of waders though in differing numbers but new amongst them was a short-billed dowitcher. Grey-necked wood rails called loudly from the mangroves but remained unseen. Also here were our first scarlet ibis, just a few, spoilers of what was to come later today. We took lunch at Carli Bay among Carib grackles, a great-tailed grackle, ruddy ground doves and saffron finches. A lineated woodpecker dropped by too, plus there were neotropical cormorants and an osprey on a stick out in the shallows. Before heading for Caroni we managed to see streak-headed woodcreeper and American redstart in the mangrove edge and at the picnic site itself two boat-billed flycatchers arrived raucously. On our way through Waterloo town, we saw a (or that) dark morph long-winged harrier again, bizarrely dipping and diving, apparently hunting in amongst houses and gardens! Hardly becoming harrier behaviour!

So, to Caroni Swamp - the finale of our stay in Trinidad. We were early for our scheduled boat trip by the Visitor Centre, used the facilities and prepared ourselves. In doing so, we were still amongst the birds. There were five red-capped cardinals at the gate, two green-throated mangos – both new birds for us, bicoloured conebill and at last we saw a rufous-browed peppershrike instead of it remaining just a '*heard only*' bird. Eventually it was time to go. We met up with Lester, our boatman-guide who skilfully manoeuvred us through the mangrove channel tunnels whilst informing us of this habitat's ecology- the differences between red, black and white mangrove. Nothing got passed him. How he spotted that very hard-to-see roosting boat-billed heron, I'll never know. So too the two tropical screech owls, the eared dove on her nest, the Central American (Cook's) tree boas and that silky anteater! Eyes like a hawk, that guy.

As we gently progressed down channels we also saw ochre-ored flatbill, northern waterthrush, lots of Little blue herons and the mangrove specialist woodcreeper, straight-billed, plus a submerged anhinga up-periscoped its snake-like neck to peer at us. There were herons all over the place; our first tricoloured herons, an unexpected vagrant grey heron as well as little blue, snowy and great egrets and yellow-crowned night herons, all feeding on the mud exposed by the now falling tide. A peregrine passed over us, on the look-out for a meal amongst such a smorgasbord of potential prey.

And then it began. Slowly at first, just a trickle, building to a torrent of what we'd primarily come here to see – the arrival to roost of scarlet ibis *en masse*. And it didn't disappoint, blood-red birds arriving from all points, in pairs, in tens, in hundreds, amounting in total to probably 4,000+ birds. A constant stream, of them and other assorted herons & egrets too, making for a sumptuous spectacle, washed down, toasted and no-doubt enhanced by the imbibing of a celebratory rum punch, or two! It was hard to leave such a magnificent entrancing scene, but the grey-dark was soon upon us and leave we must, Lester bobbing &

weaving us back through the mangrove channels in the darkness. He could do it blindfolded, I'm sure. An altogether superb finale to our stay in Trinidad.

#### **Day 8: Thursday 18 February**

It was time to move on, to leave Asa Wright and Trinidad, to head for Tobago. We breakfasted early and took time to experience the centre's legendary veranda and its array of colourful birds one last time. It was a wrench to leave this magical place, but we said our goodbyes then it was off to Piarco Airport for the short hop to Tobago. On arrival, without further ado, we drove almost directly to Blue Waters Inn, arriving just after lunch with plenty of time to unpack and settle-in for the remainder of the tour, and some of us took a welcome dip in the sea. It was tantalising to look out across the bay to see red-billed tropicbirds in the distance, a taste of what was to come.

At 4pm we set off for a wee walk through the grounds during which we saw two Trinidad motmots, then up and over the driveway hill and down to the edge of Speyside village. Here we saw a few southern lapwings, two yellow-crowned night herons, had good views of our first red-crowned woodpecker and three pale-vented pigeons. A merlin zipped by at high speed, gone in a trice. We spotted a female black-throated mango at her tiny eggcup-sized nest at the distal end of a branch just off the road. One we'd check on each day, in passing.

#### **Day 9: Friday 19 February**

Woken early by the raucous rousing *reveille* wake-up chorus of rufous-vented chachalacas, after breakfast we set off for a morning's walk along the Starwood Trace above Blue Waters Inn, with its spectacular views across the Bay of Boats to Goat Island and beyond to Little Tobago, our destination this afternoon. It was a very pleasant sortie in the warm sunshine with birds to boot. As we strolled, 30+ frigatebirds passed over high above us, we saw rufous-tailed jacamar, their exquisite iridescent bronzy colouring glinting in the sunshine. We picked up some new birds, Tobago specialities, either not seen or hard to see in Trinidad including rufous-vented chachalaca, scrub greenlet, a fine male northern white-fringed antwren, white-tipped dove and both brown-crested and fuscous flycatchers. The bay's regular osprey was back & forth too.

After lunch there was time for a dip in the sea for those that wished to, before meeting up with the irrepressible Zee, our guide and boatman for our trip out to Little Tobago. The crossing was reasonably smooth, just a little swell in places and we were soon on the island enjoying our first new birds – that amazing Audubon's shearwater incubating her lone egg behind a log, right by the steps. We'd never have known had Zee not shown us. She calmly and trustingly just sat there whilst he told us about her, before replacing the log and leaving her in peace. We slowly made our way up-slope towards the viewing platform at the top, stopping along the way to look at motmots, yellow-bellied elaenias and both blue-grey and palm tanagers. On reaching the top an amazing spectacle greeted us, 100+ red-billed tropicbirds flying to and fro or hanging in the updrafts right in front of us. Those caddish corsairs, the frigatebirds, patrolled the cliff-top menacingly, on the look-out for a returning tropicbird to harass for its fish. Down below on the cliff-face we spied both brown and white morph red-footed boobies and brown boobies too.

So intent was our enjoyment of the tropicbirds in flight that Zee had kept quiet about the half-grown chick in its nest, under some scrub right at our feet, seeing if we'd notice. He'd clearly done this before, the showman, eventually and gleefully pointing it out, and indeed an incubating adult on another nearby nest too, both giving great photo opportunities. This seabird scene was quite something to behold, and stood as we were, where David Attenborough had, when featuring this same spectacle for his *Life of Birds*. Tearing ourselves away, it was time to head back down to the boat. On the way we saw several pale-vented pigeons and a single scaly-naped pigeon, the latter a relatively recent arrival to Tobago, brought by Hurricane Ivan, yet now a small establishing population.

#### **Day 10: Saturday 20 February**

After breakfast, our guide Gladwin James was there to meet us. This morning we headed off to walk some of the Kings Bay trail on the other side of Speyside village. Progress was slow, but enjoyably so. No sooner

had we set off than we were halted in our tracks by the first of six Trinidad motmots and the first of at least six rufous-tailed jacamars that we would see this day. And fabulous views too, 'scoped in sunshine, revealing the amazing colours of these two fine species, both much easier to see on Tobago than on Trinidad. Slowly walking along, we had tropical kingbirds on wires, fly-by green-rumped parrotlets, ochre-bellied flycatcher, and two pairs of red-crowned woodpeckers including a pair mating. We had good and prolonged views too of a preening male black-faced grassquit, later saw his lady and later still found their nest. Both yellow-bellied elaenias and brown-crested flycatchers seemed to accompany us as we walked there and back, and we enjoyed good views of a couple of red-legged honeycreepers. A great black hawk flew over us, though all too fleetingly, plus a broad-winged hawk too. Before we turned to head back, we stopped to look at some orchids, species unknown, but always lovely to see regardless. On the return leg, tail-enders Huw and Gillian saw a blue-backed manakin, which the rest of us missed, but we'd get there eventually.

We returned to Blue Waters Inn for lunch, after which we took a wee break. Some swam, others read, others took a snoozette. At 4pm we ventured back out for a stroll up and over the hill down towards the village. However, our gentle late afternoon amble was somewhat curtailed when we stumbled upon a bit of a party going on down at the wheel, complete with throbbing bass sounds from boom-box, car boot sound system, with the rapping mantra *Cuz I Won Tu*. The friendly locals were having fun, but tempting as it was (or perhaps not) to join in, we beat a hasty retreat. Alas the nearby nesting black-throated mango was disturbed by the party in her midst, she was away from her nest, but hopefully not deserting. After dinner this evening, we wandered out onto the floodlit pontoon to look at fish in the illuminated water - we saw a species of pipefish.

#### **Day 11: Sunday 21 February**

Today we headed off to visit the Main Ridge rainforest reserve, cloaking Tobago's tail-end of the mighty Andes. Gladwin picked us up and we set off along the Roxborough to Bloody Bay Road, making stops along this quiet, beautiful rainforest-edged road. At our first stop we enjoyed fantastic close, 'scope views of a male collared trogon, golden-olive woodpecker, grey kingbird, black-throated mango, and watched the antics of those house wrens nesting in that wall. Oh and that red-tailed squirrel too. We stopped further along to watch yet more jacamars and motmots. In fact it was a case of *a motmot here, a motmot there, here a mot, there a mot, everywhere a motmot*, with as many as ten seen this day. Here too we saw what Gladwin called a white-tailed page, moth or butterfly? I've since Googled it, but cannot find out exactly what it was, but hey, what ever it was, it was a stunningly beautiful emerald green & white creature. Next, we spent a while watching the busy comings and goings at a roadside fruiting tree, which held our first yellow-legged thrushes - two females and four males, with their crocus-coloured bills, just like our blackies at home. Also, white-necked thrushes (three males and one female), a fine male blue-backed manakin, a red-legged honeycreeper, a cocoa woodcreeper and our first - and only - Venezuelan flycatcher. Oh and of course, a motmot or two. At another stop, for another motmot, a white-tailed sabrewing flashed past - a new and our remaining outstanding hummingbird. The views were brief, but better was to come. Further along we passed a grazing cow, complete with seven giant cowbirds rightly in attendance.

Eventually we entered the rainforest, heading down the enchanting Gilpin Trail. Along here we enjoyed views of copper-rumped hummingbird, white-necked jacobin, rufous-breasted hermit and white-tailed sabrewing - all at or on their nests. Stripe-breasted spinetail had eluded us on Trinidad, but here we caught up with three. We saw olivaceous woodcreeper, which was new for us, plus plain-brown woodcreeper, a female collared trogon and a pair of plain antvireos. A chivi vireo was seen fleetingly high in the forest canopy. Birds apart though, it was just wonderful to walk this trail amidst the splendour of rainforest. After emerging from the forest depths, we lunched then began to retrace our steps back down the road to Roxborough, making bird stops along the way. We saw a further couple of sabrewings and were challenged by that hidden and cryptic green kingfisher. It was worth persevering though, as here we also had our best, and fabulous views of another blue-backed manakin, as short-tailed swifts chattered above us. Orange-winged parrots and crested oropendolas flew back and forth plus yet more motmot sightings completed our day.



Though not quite... As we arrived back at the entrance road to Blue Waters, Gladwin slammed on the breaks as I yelled "Stop!" I'd spotted the local osprey stood up to its oxters in the river, drinking, no more than 15 metres from the vehicle. It just stood there, looking at us and all about it, with those piercing pale yellow eyes. In passing, it was a relief to see that the mango was there, having survived the previous night's party disturbance.

### **Day 12: Monday 22 February**

Our last day, back to Blighty tonight. We had a leisurely morning; some swam, some read, watched seabirds off-shore, but generally had a relaxing last few hours at the serene Blue Waters Inn before having an early lunch and setting off for the airport, birding along the way, with the prospect of a further ten possible species to see. En route, first we stopped at Roxborough to look for seabirds, including royal terns, brown pelicans and laughing gulls, plus a few semipalmated plovers on the shore. Nearing the Tobago Plantation, Beach & Golf Course complex (TPBGC) we found our first of several American moorhens. Inside, we paused at a rookery of nesting cattle egrets, a nearby grey kingbird and our first Caribbean martins flying overhead. A short walk around the overgrown sewage ponds there produced our first purple gallinules and least grebes, plus green herons and wattled jacanas. At the complex's main lake, new birds for us were belted kingfisher and black-crowned night heron, plus several anhingas, both little blue and great blue herons, snowy, cattle and great egrets. As we drove out, we saw that weird, multi-coloured sphinx moth caterpillar. Moving on, next we called in at the Bon Accord sewage ponds, where we saw many new species for the tour including some particularly unusual ones. There were both lesser and greater yellowlegs side by side allowing good comparisons to be made, ditto our first little egret together with nearby snowy egrets, our second black-crowned night heron, a juvenile, more least grebes, moorhens and gallinules, two glossy ibis and an American coot.

New birds to the last, our final new birds of the tour were three drake white-cheeked pintails in that foetid ditch. Lovely birds, shame about the setting! Ten new species had been our target today but in fact we saw 11 new birds today. Before long it was time to proceed to the airport where we said our thanks and goodbyes to Gladwin and entered the fray of airport departures for our flight home via Antigua

### **Day 13: Tuesday 23 February**

Arrive London Gatwick today.

**Systematic Bird List**  
(A total of 222 species)

**Little tinamou** *Crypturellus soui*

Frustratingly, heard only, calling hauntingly from the depths of the forest at AWNC on 13-14Feb.

**Rufous-vented chachalaca** *Ortalis ruficauda*

Our early morning wake-up call at Blue Waters Inn (BWI) and seen daily on Tobago.

**Trinidad piping guan** *Pipile pipile*

How lucky were we? One, perched for good views at Morne Bleu, up at the scatter station, 13Feb.

**Black-bellied whistling duck** *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

Five, Nariva Swamp, 15Feb.

**White-cheeked pintail** *Anas bahamensis*

Three males, in a foetid ditch at Bon Accord, Tobago, 22Feb.

**Audubon's shearwater** *Puffinus lherminieri*

A female, incubating her one egg, behind a log, Little Tobago Island, 19Feb.

**Least grebe** *Tachybaptus dominicus*

One with a chick on the ponds at Tobago Plantation Beach & Golf Course complex (henceforth TPBGC), and then two at Bon Accord sewage ponds 22Feb.

**Scarlet ibis** *Eudocimus ruber*

A few on the mud at Waterloo and then 4,000+ of them coming in to roost at Caroni Swamp, 17Feb. A tour highlight for sure.

**Glossy ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*

Two at Bon Accord sewage ponds, 22Feb.

**Boat-billed heron** *Cochlearius cochlearius cochlearius*

One, glimpsed, tucked away roosting in mangroves, Caroni Swamp, 17Feb.

**Black-crowned night heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

One adult at the lake at TPBGC, and then a juvenile at Bon Accord sewage ponds, 22Feb.

**Yellow-crowned night heron** *Nyctanassa violacea*

A few at Waterloo then 10+ on the mangrove edges and exposed mud in Caroni Swamp 17Feb. One on Little Tobago Island 19Feb and one seen in passing daily at the river near BWI.

**Green heron** *Butorides virescens*

One at the Aripo Cattle Station on 14Feb, then total of eight seen on Tobago on 22Feb at TPBGC complex & Bon Accord sewage ponds.

**Striated heron** *Butorides striata*

Five seen at Nariva Swamp on 15Feb and others in Caroni Swamp on 17Feb.

**Western cattle egret** *Bubulcus ibis*

Very common in the lowlands of Trinidad throughout the week, fewer seen on Tobago, but including a nesting rookery of 15 pairs at TPBGC on 22Feb.

**Great blue heron** *Ardea herodias*

One at Nariva Swamp on 15Feb and one on Tobago at TPBGC, 22Feb.

**Cocoi heron** *Ardea cocoi*

Just the one, Nariva Swamp, 15Feb.

**Grey heron** *Ardea cinerea*

A vagrant of this Old World species was seen in the mangroves at Caroni Swamp 17Feb.

**Great egret** *Ardea alba*

Seven at Nariva Swamp on 15Feb, several others in Caroni Swamp on 17Feb and a few on Tobago at TPBGC and Bon Accord sewage ponds on 22Feb.

**Tricoloured heron** *Egretta tricolor*

35+ at Caroni Swamp 17Feb, and on Tobago one amongst the nesting Cattle Egrets at TPBGC and a couple at Bon Accord sewage ponds, 22Feb.

**Little blue heron** *Egretta caerulea*

40+ in total at Waterloo / Caroni Swamp 17Feb, fewer on Tobago at TPBGC & Bon Accord, 22Feb.

**Little egret** *Egretta garzetta*

Increasing as a vagrant or very rare migrant, one was seen at Bon Accord sewage ponds, 22Feb.

**Snowy egret** *Egretta thula*

Many seen on 17Feb in the Waterloo area and in Caroni Swamp, plus a few on Tobago at Bon Accord sewage ponds 22Feb.

**Red-billed tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus*

Seen daily, from the bar, the pool, the terrace and the balcony of our rooms at BWI, Tobago, but at distance, off-shore. However, seen wonderfully well, close, in flight and **very** close on nests on Little Tobago Island 19Feb.

**Magnificent frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens*

Two seen flying over Asa Wright Nature Centre (AWNC) on 14Feb, then several birds off-shore / overhead at Manzanilla on 15Feb, more off-shore at Waterloo on 17Feb and at their most menacing best, harassing tropicbirds and boobies on Little Tobago Island, 19Feb.

**Brown pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis*

A few off-shore / overhead at Manzanilla, 15Feb, 30+ off-shore and loafing on boats at Waterloo 17Feb and then one daily on Tobago in the bay in front of BWI.

**Red-footed booby** *Sula sula*

10+, a mix of morphs, seen on Little Tobago Island 19Feb.

**Brown booby** *Sula leucogaster*

6+ Little Tobago Island 19Feb.

**Neotropic cormorant** *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

A few on posts in the mud at Waterloo and Carli Bay, 17Feb and 10+ on Tobago at TPBGC, 22Feb.

**Anhinga** *Anhinga anhinga*

One submerged bird "periscoping" its neck in the mangrove channel in Caroni Swamp on 17Feb then five on Tobago at TPBGC, 22Feb.

**Turkey vulture** *Cathartes aura*

Common on Trinidad, several seen daily. Absent from Tobago.

**American black vulture** *Coragyps atratus*

Very common on Trinidad. Ubiquitous. None on Tobago.

**Yellow-headed caracara** *Milvago chimachima*

One or two drive-by birds seen on our travels around Trinidad. The best though was that perched, close bird at Aripo Cattle Station on 15Feb. On Tobago, one seen flying over Bon Accord sewage ponds on 22Feb.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

One, perched close by, as we dined, ahead of night-birding, at Aripo Cattle Station, 14Feb. One on Tobago, on our late afternoon stroll from BWI on 18Feb.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

One, Caroni Swamp, 17Feb.

**Western osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

One high up over AWNC on 14Feb, then two or three at Waterloo on 17Feb. The best though was that bird up to its oxters, drinking in the river near BWI, just 15 metres from the vehicle.

**Pearl kite** *Gampsonyx swainsonii leonae*

A nesting pair, Aripo savannah, 16Feb.

**Long-winged harrier** *Circus buffoni*

Fabulous, prolonged views of an all black dark morph bird quartering Nariva Swamp on 15Feb. Another dark morph in a sugar cane stubble field *en route* to Waterloo 17Feb and then later rather bizarrely, probably that same bird, hunting in amongst houses and gardens at Waterloo!

**White hawk** *Leucopternis albicollis*

Two birds seen on 14Feb and again on 15Feb, from the veranda at AWNC.

**Common black hawk** *Buteogallus anthracinus*

Seen on four dates from the veranda / grounds of AWNC.

**Great black hawk** *Buteogallus urubitinga*

One on Tobago, along the Kings Bay trail, 20Feb.

**Savannah hawk** *Buteogallus meridionalis*

One, at the Aripo Cattle Station and then four at Nariva Swamp, 15Feb.

**Grey-lined hawk** *Buteo nitidus*

Singles at AWNC on 12Feb, Wallerfield on 14/04 and Waterloo on 17Feb. Two at Aripo on 16Feb.

**Broad-winged hawk** *Buteo platypterus*

One seen on the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb and one on Tobago on 20Feb along Kings Bay trail.

**Short-tailed hawk** *Buteo brachyurus*

Just one, seen over AWNC on 14Feb.

**Zone-tailed hawk** *Buteo albonotatus*

One seen as we prepared to dine ahead of night-birding at Aripo Cattle Station, 14Feb and one seen *en route* to Piarco Airport on 18Feb.

**Black hawk-eagle** *Spizaetus tyrannus*

One above us on the Discovery Trail at AWNC on 12Feb.

**Grey-necked wood rail** *Aramides cajanea*

Their clamorous calling heard in the mangroves at Orange Valley Road, Waterloo on 17Feb.

**Purple gallinule** *Porphyryla martinica*

Only seen on Tobago – several adults and juveniles at TPBGC, 22Feb.

**American moorhen** *Gallinula galeata*

Only seen on Tobago – several at TPBGC and at Bon Accord sewage ponds, 22Feb.

**American coot** *Fulica americana*

One, Bon Accord sewage ponds 22Feb.

**Black-necked stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus mexicanus*

Seven on the mud at Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Southern lapwing** *Vanellus chilensis*

A good scattering of birds in the lowlands on both islands.

**Semi-palmated plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Two in mixed flock of waders including Western & Semi-palmated Sandpipers at Waterloo, 17Feb. Two on the shore at Roxborough, Tobago, 22Feb.

**Wattled jacana** *Jacana jacana*

Common & widespread on both islands

**Short-billed dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus griseus*

One, among Willets and Greater Yellowlegs at Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Hudsonian whimbrel** *Numenius [phaeopus] hudsonicus*

Two on the mudflats at Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Greater yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca*

Ten in total on 17Feb, at Waterloo and in Caroni Swamp. Five in that foetid roadside ditch Bon Accord sewage ponds, Tobago, 22Feb.

**Lesser yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*

Six, with those five Greaters above, Bon Accord, 22Feb.

**Solitary sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria*

Two, Aripo Cattle Station on 15Feb, then on Tobago, four in that foetid ditch at Bon Accord, 22Feb.

**Willet** *Tringa semipalmata*

20+ at Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Spotted sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*

Two, Aripo Cattle Station on 15Feb, several seen during our boat trip into Caroni Swamp on 17Feb and several more on Tobago, at Bon Accord, 22Feb.

**Ruddy turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

Twenty, roosting on boats at Orange Valley Road, Waterloo, 17Feb and then those nine, daily at BWI, Tobago, between our toes.

**Semipalmated sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla*

A great opportunity to look in close-up at a flock of 30+ mixed *Calidrids* – Semi-Ps and Westerns, on the mudflats at Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Western sandpiper** *Calidris mauri*

As above.

**Least sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla*

One, Aripo Cattle Station on 15Feb and a few on the mud at Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Laughing gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla*

Several hundred at Waterloo 17Feb. On Tobago, two, on boats near Roxborough, 22Feb.

**Lesser black-backed gull** *Larus fuscus*

Ten, amongst the hundreds of Laughing Gulls, at Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Royal tern** *Thalasseus maximus*

One, at Waterloo on 17Feb. On Tobago there were ten on a concrete pier near Roxborough, 22Feb.

**Large-billed tern** *Phaetusa simplex simplex*

One, Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Black skimmer** *Rynchops niger*

60+ in total on the mud at Waterloo, 17Feb.

**Feral pigeon** *Columba livia*

A few seen, in towns and villages in the lowlands on Trinidad.

**Scaled pigeon** *Patagioenas speciosa*

Probably the same one, seen perched on three dates, from veranda at AWNC.

**Scaly-naped pigeon** *Patagioenas squamosa*

One, on Little Tobago Island, 19Feb.

**Pale-vented pigeon** *Patagioenas cayennensis*

Two, at Nariva Swamp on 15Feb and then 2-3 daily during our stay at BWI, Tobago.

**Eared dove** *Zenaida auriculata*

One, on a nest, along the mangrove channel, Caroni Swamp, 17Feb and one on Tobago at Bon Accord, 22Feb.

**Ruddy ground dove** *Columbina talpacoti*

It took three days to see our first of this common and widespread species, but thereafter, seen daily on both islands.

**White-tipped Dove** *Leptotila verreauxi*

One or two seen on all Tobago days, the best view was that one on Little Tobago Island, 19Feb.

**Grey-fronted dove** *Leptotila rufaxilla*

Heard daily at AWNC and eventually two seen from the veranda, 14Feb.

**Red-bellied macaw** *Orthopsittaca manilata*

Four, at the Moriche palms at Wallerfield, 14Feb.

**Green-rumped parrotlet** *Forpus passerinus*

6+ at the entrance to Aripo Cattle Station, 15Feb. On Tobago, 2-3 zipping about on the King's Bay trail on 20Feb and 3-4 at Bon Accord, 22Feb.

**Blue-headed parrot** *Pionus menstruus*

One seen from the veranda at AWNC on 12Feb, and then three on wires at Morne le Croix on the Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.

**Orange-winged parrot** *Amazona amazonica*

Seen daily, on both islands. The commonest parrot species on the islands.

**Squirrel cuckoo** *Paiya cayana*

One, seen twice from veranda at AWNC on 12Feb and 13Feb.

**Little cuckoo** *Piaya minuta*

One, along the Manzanilla road, Nariva Swamp 15Feb.

**Smooth-billed ani** *Crotophaga ani*

Common and widespread in lowlands, both islands.

**Striped cuckoo** *Tapera naevia*

Heard on several days, and eventually one seen in the Aripo savannah area 16Feb.

**Tropical screech owl** *Megascops choliba*

One, at roost where we dined, ahead of night-birding, Aripo Cattle Station 14Feb. Two roosting together in the Caroni Swamp mangroves 17Feb.

**Spectacled owl** *Pulsatrix perspicillata trinitatis*

One heard on two nights, from our rooms / veranda at AWNC.

**Ferruginous pygmy owl** *Glaucidium brasilianum*

Heard every night/early morning at AWNC and one seen on the drive down to Arima, 16Feb.

**Mottled owl** *Ciccaba virgata virgata*

One heard out there in the darkness, from the AWNC veranda, 14Feb.

**Oilbird** *Steatornis caripensis*

Eight of these weirdos seen at Dunstan's Cave, AWNC, 14Feb.

**Common potoo** *Nyctibius griseus*

Two, seen when night-birding at Aripo Cattle Station on 14Feb, and on Tobago, one seen in daytime along the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.

**Pauraque** *Nyctidromus albicollis*

Ten or so in total, in the lamp beam, resting on the road ahead or on the fencing, whilst night-birding at Aripo Cattle Station, 14Feb. One or two others seen on the road up from Arima when returning to AWNC from days out.

**Band-rumped swift** *Chaetura spinicaudus*

With care, some could be sifted out amongst Grey-rumped, in daily fly-by flocks at AWNC.

**Grey-rumped swift** *Chaetura cinereiventris*

Seen daily. The more common of the two species.

**Short-tailed swift** *Chaetura brachyura*

10+ seen as we left Wallerfield on 14Feb, then five near Waterloo, 17Feb. On Tobago, several over the visitor centre on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road 21Feb, then a few at Bon Accord on 22Feb.

**Neotropical palm swift** *Tachornis squamata*

Just three at the Moriche palm area of Wallerfield on 14Feb.

**Rufous-breasted hermit** *Glaucis hirsuta*

Seen almost every day of the two-island tour.

**Green hermit** *Phaethornis guy*

Seen most days on Trinidad, from the veranda at AWNC.

**Little hermit** *Phaethornis longuemareus*

Seen just twice; on the Discovery Trail at AWNC on 12Feb and at Aripo savannah on 16Feb.

**White-tailed sabrewing** *Campylopterus ensipennis*

Only on Tobago. 4+ seen in total on 21Feb, along the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, and along the Gilpin Trail including one at / near a nest.

**White-necked jacobin** *Florisuga mellivora*

Many seen daily at AWNC. One at nest on Gilpin Trail, Tobago, 21Feb.

**Green-throated mango** *Anthracothorax viridigula*

Three seen at Caroni Swamp, 17Feb.

**Black-throated mango** *Anthracothorax nigricollis*

At least 2-3 seen daily from AWNC veranda. Two seen on nests on Tobago; one along the Gilpin Trail and one at the bridge near BWI, 18-22Feb.

**Ruby topaz** *Chrysolampis mosquitus*

A fine male, most days, below the veranda at AWNC. On Tobago, one along Starwood Trace, 19Feb and one along Kings Bay trail, 20Feb.

**Tufted coquette** *Lophornis ornatus*

Very obliging this year, with as many as four daily from the veranda at AWNC.

**Blue-chinned sapphire** *Chlorostilbon notata*

One or two seen daily from veranda at AWNC.

**White-tailed goldenthrout** *Polytmus guainumbi*

One at Nariva Swamp on 15Feb.

**White-chested emerald** *Amazilia brevirostris*

Daily, at AWNC veranda feeders.

**Copper-rumped hummingbird** *Amazilia tobaci*

As above, but fewer than the W-c Emeralds

**Long-billed starthroat** *Heliomaster longirostris*

Seen on four dates at AWNC feeders.

**Green-backed trogon** *Trogon viridis*

A pair seen along the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb and one on 16Feb as we drove down from AWNC to Arima.

**Guianan trogon** *Trogon violaceus*

One seen on the Discovery Trail at AWNC and then two others seen from the veranda, 12Feb.

**Collared trogon** *Trogon collaris*

One heard on the Discovery Trail at AWNC on 12Feb, and then two along the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb. On Tobago, fabulous views of a male at eye-level on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, and then a female on the Gilpin Trail, 21Feb.

**American pygmy kingfisher** *Chloroceryle aenea*

We worked hard for it, but eventually saw one, Nariva Swamp, 15Feb.

**Green kingfisher** *Chloroceryle americana*

A pair seen from the bridge along the Manzanilla road on 15Feb, and a female on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.

**Belted kingfisher** *Megaceryle alcyon*

One, TPBGC on 22Feb.

**Trinidad motmot** *Momotus bahamensis*

On Trinidad, just two, seen along the driveway at AWNC on 14Feb, but on Tobago seen daily; in the grounds of BWI, two on Little Tobago Island on 19Feb, 6+ on Kings Bay trail on 20Feb and 8+ on Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.

**Channel-billed toucan** *Ramphastos vitellinus*

Heard daily at AWNC, with 1-2 seen on two days, from the veranda.

**Red-crowned woodpecker** *Melanerpes rubricapillus*

Tobago only; one seen near the rusty wheel on the BWI entrance road on 18Feb, a pair seen on the Starwood Trace on 19Feb, and a pair mating on the Kings Bay trail, 20Feb.

**Red-rumped woodpecker** *Venilornis kirkii*

A pair, on the Manzanilla road on 15Feb.

**Golden-olive woodpecker** *Colaptes rubiginosus*

Good views of two at Las Lapis Trace, Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb, one from the veranda at AWNC on 16Feb and then on Tobago, two on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road on 21Feb.

**Chestnut woodpecker** *Celeus elegans*

Two, Las Lapis Trace, Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.

**Lineated woodpecker** *Dryocopus lineatus*

At AWNC, one on the Discovery Trail on 12Feb, a pair from the veranda on 14Feb and one on 17Feb.

**Rufous-tailed jacamar** *Galbula ruficauda*

On Trinidad, great views of a pair on the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb. On Tobago, seen daily with 6+ on the Kings Bay trail on 20Feb and four on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.

**White-bearded manakin** *Manacus manacus*

Seen daily on Trinidad. The best being those four lekking males (Huw & Brenda saw eight), on the Discovery Trail at AWNC.

**Blue-backed manakin** *Chiroxiphia pareola*

Tobago only. One male along the Kings Bay trail on 20Feb, a male on the way up the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road and a different male on the way back down, 21Feb.

**Golden-headed manakin** *Pipra erythrocephala*

A pair seen along the Discovery Trail at AWNC on 12Feb and then two males seen along Las Lapis Trace, Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb.

**Bearded Bellbird** *Procnias averano*

Heard, if not seen every morning from the veranda at AWNC, and 2-3 seen more closely on the Discovery Trail on 12Feb.

**Yellow-bellied Elaenia** *Elaenia flavogaster*

Seen on eight dates, both islands.

- Southern beardless tyrannulet** *Camptostoma obsoletum*  
One, Aripo savannah, 16Feb.
- Ochre-bellied flycatcher** *Mionectes oleaginous*  
1-2 seen on three dates at AWNC. On Tobago, one along Kings Bay trail, 20Feb and one along the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.
- Ochre-ored flatbill (yellow-breasted flycatcher)** *Tolmomyias flaviventris*  
One seen on the drive down to Arima from AWNC on 16Feb and again on 17Feb.
- Euler's flycatcher** *Lathrotriccus euleri*  
One on the Discovery Trail, 12Feb and one on Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.
- Fuscous flycatcher** *Cnemotriccus fuscatus*  
Seen on Tobago only; one on Starwood Trace, above BWI, 19Feb and two on Kings Bay trail, 20Feb.
- Bran-coloured flycatcher** *Myiophobus fasciatus fasciatus*  
One, Aripo savannah area, 16Feb.
- Olive-sided flycatcher** *Contopus cooperi*  
One, along Blanchisseuse Road 13Feb.
- Tropical pewee** *Contopus cinereus*  
One, at Brasso Seco 13Feb, one Manzanilla road, 15Feb and one in the Aripo savanna area, 16Feb.
- Pied water tyrant** *Fluvicola pica*  
Two at the Aripo Cattle Station and then two at Nariva Swamp, 15Feb.
- White-headed marsh tyrant** *Arundinicola leucocephala*  
Four at the Aripo Cattle Station and two at Nariva Swamp, 15Feb.
- Great kiskadee** *Pitangus sulphuratus*  
Common everywhere in Trinidad, curiously absent from Tobago.
- Boat-billed flycatcher** *Megarhynchus pitangua*  
One seen along Las Lapis Trace, on Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb, then a pair at Carli Bay, 17Feb.
- Sulphury flycatcher** *Tyrannopsis sulphurea*  
Six, in Moriche palms, Wallerfield, 14Feb.
- Tropical kingbird** *Tyrannus melancholicus*  
Common and widespread
- Grey kingbird** *Tyrannus dominicensis*  
On Trinidad, one in the Aripo savannah area on 16Feb. On Tobago, one along Starwood Trace, 19Feb and one on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb
- Venezuelan flycatcher** *Myiarchus venezuelensis*  
One, on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.
- Brown-crested flycatcher** *Myiarchus tyrannulus*  
On Tobago, two along Starwood Trace and a further two on Little Tobago Island on 19Feb, two along the Kings Bay trail on 20Feb and two on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road.
- Dusky-capped flycatcher** *Myiarchus tuberculifer tuberculifer*  
Two on the Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.
- Bright-rumped attila** *Attila spadiceus*  
Heard daily from the veranda at AWNC but never seen.
- Great antshrike** *Taraba major*  
A male along the Discovery Trail at AWNC, 12Feb and again on 14Feb.
- Black-crested antshrike** *Sakesphorus canadensis*  
A pair at Nariva Swamp, 15Feb.
- Barred antshrike** *Thamnophilus doliatus*  
Heard, if not seen, daily at veranda and elsewhere in grounds of AWNC. On Tobago; a pair along Starwood Trace, 19Feb, a pair along King's Bay trail, 20Feb and a male along Gilpin Trail, 21Feb.
- Plain antvireo** *Dysithamnus mentalis*  
A pair on the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb. On Tobago, a pair along the Gilpin Trail, 21Feb.
- White-flanked antwren** *Myrmotherula axillaris*  
A pair on the AWNC driveway, 15Feb and a pair, Aripo savannah area 16Feb.



**Northern white-fringed antwren** *Formicivora grisea*

A fine male, Starwood Trace on 19Feb, and a pair briefly, on the Kings Bay trail, 20Feb.

**Silvered antbird** *Scoteria naevia*

A female, in roadside mangroves on the Manzanilla to Nariva Swamp road, 15Feb.

**White-bellied antbird** *Myrmeciza longipes*

A pair seen along the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb.

**Black-faced antthrush** *Formicarius analis*

Unusual prolonged views of a preening bird in the forest leaf litter, Las Lapis Trace, on the Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb. Others heard at AWNC.

**Stripe-breasted spinetail** *Synallaxis cinnamomea*

2-3 seen on Gilpin Trail, Tobago, 21Feb.

**Pale-breasted spinetail** *Synallaxis albescens*

Two seen on Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.

**Yellow-chinned spinetail** *Certhiaxis cinnamomea*

Five at the Aripo Cattle Station on 15Feb.

**Grey-throated leaftosser** *Sclerurus albigularis*

One on the road down from AWNC, 16Feb.

**Streaked xenops** *Xenops rutilans*

One seen on Las Lapis Trace, 13Feb and one Aripo savannah on 16Feb.

**Plain-brown woodcreeper** *Dendrocincla fuliginosa*

One Las Lapis Trace, on the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb, and one on the Gilpin Trail, 21Feb.

**Olivaceous woodcreeper** *Sittasomas griseicapillus*

Just the one seen fleetingly, along Gilpin Trail, 21Feb.

**Straight-billed woodcreeper** *Dendroplex picus*

One, Caroni Swamp mangroves, 17Feb.

**Cocoa woodcreeper** *Xiphorhynchus susurrans*

One seen along Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb, and one on Tobago, along the Kings Bay trail, 20Feb.

**Streak-headed woodcreeper** *Lepidocolaptes souleyetii littorali*

One, Caroni Swamp mangroves, 17Feb.

**Rufous-browed peppershrike** *Cyclarhis gujanensis*

Heard daily on Trinidad, and one eventually seen in the Caroni Swamp mangroves, 17Feb.

**Chivi [red-eyed] vireo** *Vireo olivaceus tobagensis*

Tobago only, one heard (glimpsed by some?), on Little Tobago Island 19Feb and then one seen fleetingly high up in the canopy along the Gilpin Trail, 21Feb.

**Golden-fronted greenlet** *Hylophilus aurantiifrons*

Three, Las Lapis Trace on Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.

**Scrub greenlet** *Hylophilus flavipes*

Tobago only. Two seen along Starwood Trace, 19Feb.

**White-winged swallow** *Tachycineta albiventer*

Quite common in Trinidad, in the lowlands & wetlands. On Tobago, one seen at Bon Accord sewage ponds, 22Feb.

**Caribbean martin** *Progne dominicensis*

20+ at TPBGC, 22Feb.

**Grey-breasted martin** *Progne chalybea*

Common & widespread in lowlands of Trinidad.

**Southern rough-winged swallow** *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*

Low numbers seen at all various locations visited in Trinidad.

**Rufous-breasted wren** *Pheugopedius rutilus*

Just one, seen on the drive down from AWNC to Arima, 16Feb. Heard only on Tobago, along the Gilpin Trail, 21Feb.

**House wren** *Troglodytes aedon*

Ones and twos here and there, both islands.

**Long-billed gnatwren** *Ramphocaenus melanurus*

Just one, seen on the drive down from AWNC to Arima, 16Feb.

**Tropical mockingbird** *Mimus gilvus*

Common and widespread, both islands.

**Yellow-legged thrush** *Turdus flavipes*

Great views of four males and two females in a fruiting tree along the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.

**Cocoa thrush** *Turdus fumigatus*

Daily from veranda at AWNC and on the Blanchisseuse Road.

**Spectacled thrush** *Turdus nudigenis*

Daily from the veranda at AWNC, and widely seen on Tobago.

**White-necked thrush** *Turdus albicollis*

Seen on four dates at AWNC. On Tobago, three males and two females seen along the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road on 21Feb, in the same fruiting tree as the above Yellow-legged Thrushes.

**Tropical parula** *Setophaga pitaiyumi*

He of the "pale-blue voice", one heard and glimpsed high in the canopy along the road down from AWNC, 14Feb.

**Yellow warbler** *Setophaga aestiva*

One seen as we dined, ahead of night-birding, Aripo Cattle Station on 14Feb, and one Aripo savanna, 16Feb.

**American redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*

Two, on the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb, and one in the Aripo savannah area, 16Feb.

**Northern waterthrush** *Parkesia noveboracensis*

A roosting ball of feathers, seen on the night-walk along the AWNC driveway on 14Feb, and a few seen along the mangrove channels in Caroni Swamp, 17Feb.

**Masked yellowthroat** *Geothlypis aequinoctialis*

One, on the edge of Arima town, 16/01.

**Crested oropendola** *Psarocolius decumanus*

Widespread and common in Trinidad. Seen also on both Tobago and Little Tobago Island, though in lower numbers.

**Yellow-rumped cacique** *Cacicus cela*

Nesting colonies at both Brasso Saco & Morne la Croix along the Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb – 35+ pairs in total.

**Moriche oriole** *Icterus chryscephalus*

A rare and tricky bird to see on Trinidad, yet we lucked upon two, posing for photos, at the Moriche palms at Wallerfield, 14Feb.

**Yellow oriole** *Icterus nigrogularis*

Seen on five dates at AWNC.

**Yellow-hooded blackbird** *Chrysomus icterocephalus*

Just two, at Nariva Swamp on 15Feb.

**Giant cowbird** *Molothrus oryzivorus*

Two, in a field, from our vantage point overlooking Nariva Swamp, 15Feb. On Tobago, seven with a cow, on our way up the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, and two on our way down, 21Feb.

**Shiny cowbird** *Molothrus bonariensis*

Five as we lunched at Brasso Seco on 13Feb and two at Nariva Swamp, 15Feb. On Tobago, three along Starwood Trace, 19Feb, and two on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.

**Carib grackle** *Quiscalus lugubris*

Widespread and common in the lowlands.

**Great-tailed grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus*

Two at Carli Bay, 17Feb.

**Red-breasted blackbird** *Sturnella militaris*

One at the Aripo Cattle Station, 14Feb and then five there, and two more at Nariva Swamp, on 15Feb.

- Bananaquit** *Coereba flaveola*  
Common and widespread, both islands.
- Saffron finch** *Sicalis flaveola*  
Six at Carli Bay, 17Feb.
- Grassland yellow finch** *Sicalis luteola*  
Four at the Aripo Cattle Station, 15Feb.
- Blue-black grassquit** *Volatinia jacarina*  
A few seen in lowlands of Trinidad and a couple seen on Tobago.
- Black-faced grassquit** *Tiaris bicolor*  
On the Kings Bay trail on 20Feb, we saw a male, then later a female, and then found her nest.
- Red-capped cardinal** *Paroaria gularis*  
Five at the entrance to the Caroni Swamp Visitor Centre, 17Feb.
- White-lined tanager** *Tachyphonus rufus*  
Widespread and common.
- Silver-beaked tanager** *Ramphocelus carbo*  
Widespread and quite common. Absent from Tobago.
- Blue-grey tanager** *Thraupis episcopus*  
Common. Both islands.
- Palm tanager** *Thraupis palmarum*  
Widespread and very common. Both islands.
- Turquoise tanager** *Tangara mexicana*  
Seen from the veranda at Asa Wright, on six dates. Others, Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.
- Speckled tanager** *Tangara guttata*  
Three on the Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.
- Bay-headed tanager** *Tangara gyrola*  
One or two from AWNC veranda, most days. Others, Blanchisseuse Road, 13Feb.
- Blue dacnis** *Dacnis cayana*  
A couple from the veranda at AWNC on four dates.
- Purple honeycreeper** *Cyanerpes caeruleus*  
Common and very tame at AWNC.
- Red-legged honeycreeper** *Cyanerpes cyaneus*  
Our first was on the trail to the oilbird cave on 14Feb, then 1-2 on Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb, and then two on the road down from AWNC, 14Feb. On Tobago, two along the Kings Bay trail, 20Feb and one in a fruiting tree on the Roxborough to Bloody Bay road, 21Feb.
- Green honeycreeper** *Chlorophanes spiza*  
Very common AWNC.
- Bicoloured conebill** *Conirostrum bicolor*  
One at the bridge over the Nariva River on 15Feb, and 1-2 in the mangroves at Caroni Swamp, 17Feb.
- Red-crowned ant tanager** *Habia rubica*  
Two along Las Lapis Trace, on the Blanchisseuse Road on 13Feb, and then one on the AWNC driveway, 15Feb.
- Trinidad euphonia** *Euphonia trinitatis*  
Five, on the edge of Arima town, 16Feb.
- Violaceous euphonia** *Euphonia violacea*  
Daily, common at AWNC, and along Blanchisseuse Road, fewer on our Tobago days.
- Greyish saltator** *Saltator coerulescens*  
One, Nariva Swamp, 15Feb.

## OTHER TAXA

Though birds were our primary focus, we saw a selection of a few other taxa.

## MAMMALS

**Red-rumped agouti** *Dasyprocta leporine*  
**Silky anteater** *Cyclopes didactylus*  
**Red-tailed squirrel** *Sciurus granatensis*  
**Egyptian mongoose** *Herpestes ichneumon*  
**White-faced capuchin** *Cebus capucinus*  
**Rat sp.** *Rattus sp.*  
**Common tent-making bat** *Uroderma bilobatum*  
**Common long-tongued bat** *Glossophaga soricina*  
**Greater white-lined bat** *Saccopteryx bilineata*  
**Brazilian long-nosed bat** *Rhynchonycteris naso*

## REPTILES

**Common/golden tegu** *Tupinambis teguixin*  
**Common/green iguana** *Iguana iguana*  
**Grey speckled anole** *Anolis aeneus*  
**Common ameiva** *Ameiva ameiva*  
**Tropical house gecko** *Hemidactylus mabouia*  
**Variegated gecko** *Gonatodes cacilae*  
**Ocellated gecko** *Sphaerodactylus argus*  
**Central American (Cook's) tree boa** *Corallus ruschenbergi*  
**Spectacled caiman** *Caiman crocodilus*

## BUTTERFLIES

**Postman** *Heliconius melpomene*  
**Red anartia** *Anartia amathea*  
**Cloudless sulphur** *Phoebis sennae*  
**Florida white** *Appias drusilla*  
**Gold Rim swallowtail** *Battus polydamas*  
**Monarch** *Danaus plexippus*

## OTHER ASSORTED CRITTERS

**Leafcutter ant** *Atta cephalotes*  
**Firefly** *Oculogryphus sp.*  
**Trinidad chevron tarantula** *Psalmophoeus cambridgei*  
**Trinidad mountain crab** *Pseudotelphusa garmani*  
**Atlantic ghost crab** *Ocyrode quadrata*  
**Mangrove tree crab** *Aratus pisonii*  
**Hermit crab sp.** (in a Caribbean Turban shell).  
**Trinidad mini-stick** *Ocnophiloidea regularis*  
**Harvestman (spider) sp.**  
**Four-eyed fish** *Anableps anableps*  
**Rhinoceros beetle sp.**  
**Click beetle sp.**  
**Red skimmer sp.**