

This past June 14, a group of nine birders and photographers (TAS President Barros, along with Kathy Burkhart, Ann Wiley, Barbara and Ted Center, Nancy Bruce Moreland and Lori and Tony Pasko) joined me for Tropical Audubon's birding tour to Trinidad and Tobago. We were also joined by Mark Lopez, a tutoring colleague of Ann's, for the first four days of the tour. The islands, which I first visited in 2008, are located between Venezuela and Grenada, at the southern end of the Antilles, and are home to a distinctly South American avifauna, with over 470 species recorded. The avifauna is sometimes referred to as a Whitman's sampler of birding, in that most neotropical bird families are represented on the islands by a one species, but never by an overwhelming number, making for an ideal introduction for birders with limited experience in the tropics. The bird list includes two of the critically endangered Trinidad Piping Guan and the beautiful yet considerably more common Trinidad Motmot; we would see both during our tour.

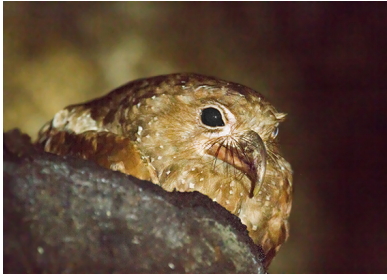
Upon our arrival in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago's capital, we were met by the father and son of Roodal and Dave Ramlal, our drivers and bird guides during our stay in Trinidad. Ruddy Ground Dove, Gray-breasted Martin, White-winged Swallow and Carib Grackle were among the first birds encountered around the airport. We were immediately driven to Asa Wright Nature Centre, in the Arima Valley of Trinidad's Northern Range, our base of operations for the first seven nights of our tour. After settling into our rooms, we gathered on the nature center's veranda, which not only provided spectacular views of the surrounding valley, but was also buzzing with activity at the many hummingbird and fruit feeders. Common

visitors to the hummingbird feeders included White-necked Jacobin, Black-throated Mango, White-chested Emerald and Copper-rumped Hummingbird. Hummers seen feeding in the surrounding gardens would eventually include Rufous-breasted, Little and Green Hermits, Black-banded Sapphire and the diminutive and adorable Tufted Coquette.

Other birds commonly seen or heard from the veranda during our stay included Orange-winged Parrot, Barred Antshrike, Forest Elaenia, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Tropical Mockingbird, Spectacled Thrush, White-eyed, Bluegray, Palm and Silver-beaked Tanagers, Bananaquit, Blue Dacnis, Green Honeycreeper, Crested Oropendola, Yellow Oriole and Violaceous Euphonia. Less frequently seen were Scaled and White-rumped Pigeons, Gray-fronted Dove, Channel-billed Toucan, Lineated Woodpecker, Piratic Flycatcher, Black-tailed Tityra, Turquoise and Bay-headed Tanagers and Purple Honeycreeper. Sightings were not limited to birds.

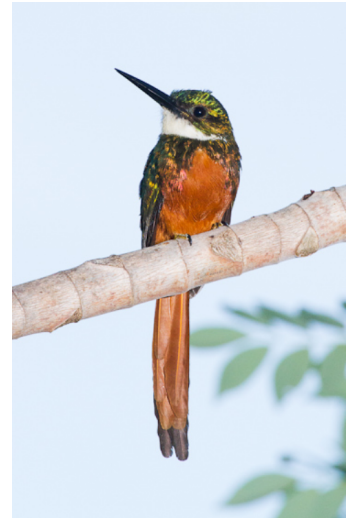
Red-rumped Agoutis and Tegu lizards were also frequently seen around the nature center. On our last full day at Asa Wright, an immature Fork-tailed Flycatcher was photographed from the veranda, a possible first sighting for the nature center!

Asa Wright has an extensive trail system, which we explored on several occasions, either with guides or on our own. During our first foray down the popular Discovery Trail, we found all three Trinidadian trogons: Green-backed, Guianan and Collared. Other birds found along the trail included Plain Woodcreeper, Giant Antshrike, Streaked Flycatcher, Cocoa and White-necked Thrushes and Red-browed Ant-tanager. A Common Potoo was discovered in its day roost in a bamboo stand along the trail; this bird was found at the exact same spot on all subsequent visits. Both Golden-headed and Bearded Manakins were easily seen at their trailside lek. These birds became popular photographic subjects for our group. The ventriloquial calls of Bearded Bellbirds,



said to resemble the sound of a hammer striking an anvil, rang throughout the forest, but these birds proved to be more of a challenge to actually see. Eventually, we spotted one, and then another, high in the forest canopy. Later in the week, we hiked the trail to Dunston Cave, the most well known **Oilbird** roosting location on the island. Listening to the otherworldly calls of these strange nocturnal birds as we entered the cave was an unforgettable experience. In addition to the Oilbirds, we also found a Chestnut-collared Swift on a nest at the cave entrance.

Asa Wright's half-mile paved driveway, covered either while driving to or from the nature center or while on foot, added several species to our trip list, including Common Black-Hawk, Trinidad Motmot, Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, Streaked Xenops, White-flanked Antwren, Golden-fronted Greenlet and Long-billed Antwren. Many more were added along Blanchisseuse Road, which bisects the Northern Range and leads to higher elevations north of Asa Wright. Species tallied during roadside stops included Little Tinamou (heard only), Swallow-tailed Kite, Short-tailed, Zone-tailed and Gray-lined Hawk (the latter a recent AOU split from Gray Hawk), Squirrel Cuckoo, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Short-tailed Swift, **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, Golden-Olive Woodpecker, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Silvered (heard only) and White-bellied Antbird, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Euler's Flycatcher, Tropical Pewee, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Rufous-breasted Wren, Speckled and Swallow Tanagers, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Sooty and Blue-black Grassquits, Tropical Parula, Golden-crowned Warbler, Grayish Saltator, Yellow-rumped Cacique and Trinidad Euphonia.



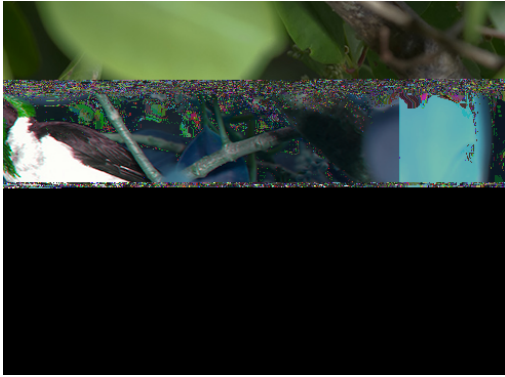
The tour included several day trips with Roodal and Dave to other parts of Trinidad. One evening, we drove to Matura Beach, on the island's east coast and one of the world's largest **leatherback turtle** nesting sites. It was an unforgettable experience: not only did we witness nesting by several leatherbacks, but we also had the good fortune to find a nest where tiny hatchlings were just emerging from the sand! Another day, we left Asa Wright pre-dawn and headed to Grand Riviere, on the north coast and the most reliable location to see Trinidad Piping Guan. Not long after we arrived, a piping guan was spotted at the top of a distant tree. It was eventually joined

by two more of these critically endangered birds. Other birds found here included Plumbeous Kite and Crimson-crested Woodpecker. Grand Riviere is also a major nesting location for leatherback turtles; sadly, we learned soon after we returned to Florida that many of the turtle nests on that beach were inadvertently destroyed by heavy equipment being used to prevent beach erosion.

Several of our day trips were devoted to lowland areas south of the Northern Range. One morning was spent at Aripo Agriculture Research Station, where water buffalo are raised. Birds seen here included Striated Heron, Pinnated Bittern, Long-winged Harrier, Savannah Hawk, Purple Gallinule, Southern Lapwing, Wilson's Snipe, Wattled Jacana, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Smooth-billed Ani, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Pied Water-Tyrant, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Grassland Yellow-Finch, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater and Yellow-hooded and Red-breasted Blackbirds. On another morning, we covered areas north of the research station, where we found Striped and Little Cuckoo, Bran-colored Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Peppershrike and Masked Yellowthroat. At Aripo Savannah, we added White-winged Becard. We returned to the research station yet another night for some after-dark birding. Both vans saw **Tropical Screech-Owl**



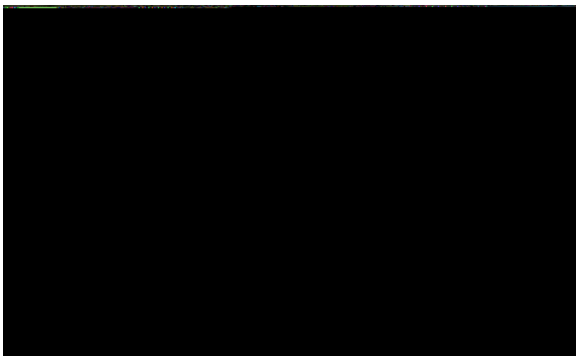
and Common Pauraque, but only one van spotted a White-tailed Nightjar. That van also witnessed Roodal's rescue of a fledgling screech-owl that was stuck in a fence. A torrential rainstorm, complete with thunder and lightning, cut short our birding for the evening.



Other areas visited included Manzanilla Beach and Nariva Swamp, on the east coast, where we found Yellow-headed and Crested Caracara, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Black-crested Antshrike and Lesson's Seedeater. Red-shouldered Macaw, Fork-tailed Palm-Swift, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Sulphury Flycatcher and Moriche Oriole were all seen in Moriche Palm habitat at Wallerfield, an abandoned US military airfield. A boat trip at Caroni Swamp, home to Trinidad's national bird, the Scarlet Ibis, was scheduled for our last evening in Trinidad. On the way, we stopped at Yerette, the home of Gloria and Theo Ferguson, where up to thirteen species of hummingbirds visit their feeders. We quickly added two new hummers to our trip list:

Green-breasted Mango and the spectacular Ruby-topaz Hummingbird. We were also treated to a presentation of Theo's breathtaking hummingbird photographs. The highlight at Caroni, of course, was the seemingly endless parade of Scarlet Ibis coming in to roost for the night. Other sightings during our boat ride included Ringed Kingfisher, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Northern Scrub Flycatcher, Bicolored Conebill and **Masked Cardinal**, plus a few each of Cook's Tree Boa, Silky Anteater and Four-eyed Fish.

Our last three nights were spent on Trinidad's sister island, Tobago, reached by a quick fifteen-minute flight from Port of Spain. We were met at the airport by Gladwin James, our Tobago driver and guide, who drove us by bus to Blue Waters Inn, at the opposite end of the island. Along the way, we visited wetland areas where we added a number of new birds, including Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, White-cheeked Pintail, Masked Duck, **Rufous-vented Chachalaca**, Least Grebe, Neotropic Cormorant, Eared and White-tipped Dove, Mangrove Cuckoo, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Caribbean Martin, Black-faced Grassquit and Giant Cowbird. The Blue Waters Inn, located right on the beach in a beautiful secluded cove on Tyrrels Bay, has added many new amenities, including an infinity pool, since my last visit. The birding around the grounds was also quite good. Rufous-vented Chachalaca roamed the grounds in search of fallen mangoes, and Trinidad Motmot and Rufous-tailed Jacamar were common sights along nearby roads. Other birds found in the vicinity of the lodge included Rufous-breasted Hermit, Black-throated Mango, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Barred Antshrike, White-fringed Antwren, Yellow-breasted and Fuscous Flycatchers and Scrub Greenlet. Magnificent Frigatebirds were a constant presence overhead.



A visit to Little Tobago Island was the highlight of our first morning's itinerary. The island was once home to a population of Greater Bird of Paradise, introduced in 1909 in an attempt to save it from extinction in its native New Guinea; the population survived until the early 1960's. Little Tobago is accessed via a glass-bottomed boat that leaves from the Blue Waters dock. Common Terns were seen near the dock; a pass by Goat Island added Brown Booby, Bridled, Sooty and Roseate Tern and Brown Noddy, plus Laughing Gulls with chicks. Two Scaly-naped Pigeons, recent colonizers to the island, flew over us as

we approached the Little Tobago dock. Once on the island, our guide Frank led us up a trail leading to overlooks on the opposite side. We enjoyed up-close looks at White-tailed Nightjar and Trinidad Motmot along the way. The view from the overlook was spectacular: **Red-billed Tropicbirds** soared along the cliffs before

us, many at eye level, while Red-footed and Brown Boobies gathered on the rocks below. On the return ride, the boat slowed down as we passed over coral formations, including a massive brain coral that we could view through the boat's glass bottom.

Our last full day was spent searching for Tobago's higher elevation birds that inhabit the Main Ridge Forest Reserve. Gladwin led us to Gilpin Trace, a trail on the Roxborough-Bloody Bay Road. Rain showers prevented us from doing any roadside birding along the way, but the rains subsided by the time we reached the trailhead. As we hiked the muddy trail, we quickly found two of our target species: first a **White-tailed Sabrewing**, a hummingbird once thought extinct on Tobago, then a Yellow-legged Thrush. As we continued down the trail, the rain re-intensified and soon, we were forced to retreat, but not before getting distant views of a Venezuelan Flycatcher. After lunch at the trailhead, we drove to an area along the road where Blue-backed Manakin, another target species, is reliably seen. The rain eventually ended, providing Gladwin with an opportunity to call in a manakin. Eventually, everyone was rewarded with great looks at this stunning little bird. We also had even better looks at another White-tailed Sabrewing. Yet another target bird, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, was found a little farther down the road.



By the trip's conclusion, the group and its various leaders had found and identified, by my tally, exactly 200 species of birds. Mammals seen included the aforementioned agouti and anteater, **Red-tailed Squirrel** and a few unidentified bats, including one that Joe Barros discovered one evening in our shower at Asa Wright. Uncounted were the assorted lizards, butterflies, spiders and other creepy-crawlies we encountered along the way. Thanks go out to our amazing guides and the top-notch staffs at Asa Wright and Blue Waters, all of whom helped to make this a fantastic trip. Special thanks go to Mark Hedden and Larry Lebowitz of Caligo Ventures, through which we arranged this outstanding tour.

Finally, thanks to Nancy and Bruce Moreland for the wonderful photographs that accompany this report. More of their Trinidad and Tobago photos can be found at <http://www.beehappygraphics.com/Trinidad.html>

Bird list:

Little Tinamou (heard only)	Cattle Egret	Short-tailed Hawk
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Great Blue Heron	Zone-tailed Hawk
White-cheeked Pintail	Great Egret	Crested Caracara
Masked Duck	Tricolored Heron	Yellow-headed Caracara
Rufous-vented Chachalaca	Snowy Egret	Common Gallinule
Trinidad Piping-Guan	Little Blue Heron	Purple Gallinule
Least Grebe	Scarlet Ibis	Southern Lapwing
Red-billed Tropicbird	Turkey Vulture	Wilson's Snipe
Brown Pelican	Black Vulture	Wattled Jacana
Red-footed Booby	Osprey	Laughing Gull
Brown Booby	Swallow-tailed Kite	Brown Noddy
Neotropic Cormorant	Plumbeous Kite	Sooty Tern
Anhinga	Long-winged Harrier	Bridled Tern
Magnificent Frigatebird	White Hawk	Common Tern
Pinnated Bittern	Common Black-Hawk	Roseate Tern
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Savanna Hawk	Common Ground-Dove
Green Heron	Broad-winged Hawk	Ruddy Ground-Dove
Striated Heron	Gray-lined Hawk	Rock Pigeon

Scaled Pigeon	Crimson-crested Woodpecker	Caribbean Martin
Scaly-naped Pigeon	Stripe-breasted Spinetail	Gray-breasted Martin
Pale-vented Pigeon	Yellow-chinned Spinetail	Southern Rough-winged Swallow
Eared Dove	Gray-throated Leaf-tosser	House Wren
White-tipped Dove	Streaked Xenops	Rufous-breasted Wren
Gray-fronted Dove	Plain-brown Woodcreeper	Long-billed Gnatwren
Red-bellied Macaw	Olivaceous Woodcreeper	Yellow-legged Thrush
Green-rumped Parrotlet	Straight-billed Woodcreeper	Cocoa Thrush
Orange-winged Parrot	Cocoa Woodcreeper	Spectacled Thrush
Mangrove Cuckoo	Great Antshrike	White-necked Thrush
Squirrel Cuckoo	Black-crested Antshrike	Tropical Mockingbird
Little Cuckoo	Barred Antshrike	White-lined Tanager
Smooth-billed Ani	White-flanked Antwren	Silver-beaked Tanager
Striped Cuckoo	White-fringed Antwren	Blue-gray Tanager
Barn Owl	Silvered Antbird (heard only)	Palm Tanager
Tropical Screech-Owl	White-bellied Antbird	Turquoise Tanager
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl	Forest Elaenia	Speckled Tanager
Oilbird	Yellow-bellied Elaenia	Bay-headed Tanager
Common Potoo	Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet	Swallow Tanager
Common Pauraque	Ochre-bellied Flycatcher	Blue Dacnis
White-tailed Nightjar	Northern Scrub-Flycatcher	Green Honeycreeper
Chestnut-collared Swift	Yellow-breasted Flycatcher	Purple Honeycreeper
Gray-rumped Swift	Bran-colored Flycatcher	Red-legged Honeycreeper
Short-tailed Swift	Euler's Flycatcher	Bicolored Conebill
Fork-tailed Palm-Swift	Fuscous Flycatcher	Red-crowned Ant-Tanager
Rufous-breasted Hermit	Tropical Pewee	Bananaquit
Little Hermit	Pied Water-Tyrant	Sooty Grassquit
Green Hermit	White-headed Marsh-Tyrant	Black-faced Grassquit
White-tailed Sabrewing	Piratic Flycatcher	Grassland Yellow-Finch
White-necked Jacobin	Great Kiskadee	Blue-black Grassquit
Green-throated Mango	Streaked Flycatcher	Lesson's Seedeater
Black-throated Mango	Boat-billed Flycatcher	Ruddy-breasted Seedeater
Ruby-topaz Hummingbird	Sulphury Flycatcher	Masked Cardinal
Tufted Coquette	Tropical Kingbird	Grayish Saltator
Blue-chinned Sapphire	Fork-tailed Flycatcher	Tropical Parula
White-chested Emerald	Gray Kingbird	Masked Yellowthroat
Copper-rumped Hummingbird	Venezuelan Flycatcher	Golden-crowned Warbler
Green-backed Trogon	Brown-crested Flycatcher	Crested Oropendola
Guianan Trogon	Bearded Bellbird	Yellow-rumped Cacique
Collared Trogon	White-bearded Manakin	Moriche Oriole
Ringed Kingfisher	Blue-backed Manakin	Yellow Oriole
American Pygmy Kingfisher	Golden-headed Manakin	Yellow-hooded Blackbird
Trinidad Motmot	Black-tailed Tityra	Giant Cowbird
Rufous-tailed Jacamar	White-winged Becard	Shiny Cowbird
Channel-billed Toucan	Rufous-browed Peppershrike	Carib Grackle
Red-crowned Woodpecker	Red-eyed (Chivi) Vireo	Red-breasted Blackbird
Red-rumped Woodpecker	Golden-fronted Greenlet	Trinidad Euphonia
Golden-olive Woodpecker	Scrub Greenlet	Violaceous Euphonia
Lineated Woodpecker	White-winged Swallow	