

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert -No. 2000-02

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-02) for 13 January 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Despite lower than average numbers of gulls wintering along the west coast of Trinidad, rarities continue to be found. An adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL*, representing the second individual of this species reported this winter, turned up among 310 LAUGHING GULLS on the mudflats at Waterloo on 9 January. Also present were five GREAT BLUE HERONS. Although 675 LAUGHING GULLS were noted at Orange Valley, no other species of gulls were noted.

In northern Trinidad, two PEREGRINE FALCONS were seen in the Caroni Rice Fields on 9 January.

Surprisingly we have not received any other reports this week, though normally a diversity of rarities are reported at this time of the year. Are there any unusual sightings from Tobago?

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Lekking is generally considered to represent an extreme form of polygyny, in which a male mates two or more females during a breeding season. Two hypotheses have been proposed for the evolution of a lek-based mating system. The hot spot hypothesis postulates that a dominant male selects the best display spot while subordinate males display as close as possible to the dominant male's position. The hotshot hypothesis postulates that the most attractive, dominant male displays where he can be visited most conveniently by females while subordinate males seek to be seen by the females by displaying close to the dominant male or intercepting females on their way to the dominant male.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, grahamlwhite@hotmail.com.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert -No. 2000-03

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-03) for 20 January 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Barbados, four large gulls thought to be immature **YELLOW-LEGGED GULLS*** (potentially 1st for Barbados and the Caribbean) were carefully studied and photographed during 15-16 January at Brighton Beach. A **ROYAL TERN**, two **BROWN BOOBIES** and two **MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS** were also present. This represents the largest aggregation of large gulls yet recorded on Barbados. The only previous New World records of Yellow-legged Gull are from northeastern North America. Observers should be alert for Yellow-legged Gull and other large gull species elsewhere in the region. Also on Barbados, 114 **AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS** were counted at the only known colony on 8 January.

In Martinique, four **WHITE-BREASTED THRASHERS** were found at Presqu'ile de la Caravelle in the afternoon of 19 December. Attempts to find the **MARTINIQUE ORIOLE** at this locality and in the Northern Forest Reserve on 20 December were unsuccessful, but two were found along the road between Anses-d'arlet and Le Diamant, about 100 metres east of the turnoff to la Plaine, on 21 December. A singing male **ANTILLEAN EUPHONIA** was also noted at Le Diamant on 21 December.

On Chacachacare Island, off northwest Trinidad, the immature light-phased **SWAINSON'S HAWK*** (8th for T&T, 1st for Bocas Islands and 1st fall record) first noted on 29 October was heard again (but not seen) during 12-13 January, providing evidence that it is wintering on the island. It should be searched for on the southern peninsula, between the Nuns' Quarters and the Salt Pond.

In Trinidad, the adult **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL*** first noted at Waterloo on 9 January was relocated at Orange Valley on 19 January. An unusual feature of this gull is a blackish "ring" at the tip of the bill, in front of a red spot; although reminiscent of a California Gull, the bird is too large, its back is distinctly darker than that of Laughing Gulls, and other characters seem typical of Lesser Black-backed Gull. Elsewhere in Trinidad, a **BROAD-WINGED HAWK** soared over Maracas Valley on 20 January, a few hundred **DICKCISSELS** were seen at McBean on 18 January, and a **CLAPPER RAIL** was noted in the ditch beside the Hindu Temple at Waterloo on 18 January.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: The White-bearded Manakin is the most familiar of the lekking birds of Trinidad. Although leks occur scattered throughout the island's forests, a large lek may be leisurely studied at the Asa Wright Nature Centre. Leks are typically attended by several dozen displaying males, though leks with up to 70 "courts" (individual territories within a lek) have been recorded. In Trinidad, some leks have persisted at the same locality for more than 40 years. Lekking occurs year-round, but is much reduced when the birds are moulting (replacing their feathers) during July-December. The males display throughout the day, but activity usually peaks in mid-morning and early afternoon.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert -No. 2000-04

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-04) for 28 January 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Barbados, a fifth large gull, thought to be a HERRING GULL, joined the other four large gulls thought to be immature YELLOW-LEGGED GULLS (potentially 1st for Barbados and the Caribbean) during the weekend of 22-23 January. For further details on the identification of Yellow-legged Gulls, see the following websites: <http://www.22briar.freeserve.co.uk/atlantis.htm>
<http://www.nrossiter.supanet.com/ylg>

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a SCALED ANTPITTA*, apparently first detected during the Christmas Bird Count on 19 December, has been regularly heard but not seen at an undisclosed locality (though not at the Asa Wright Nature Centre, where one was present during April-May 1999). An OSPREY and a BROAD-WINGED HAWK were noted flying over Maracas Valley on 30 January. On 22 January, two light-phased HOOK-BILLED KITES were noted along the Blanchisseuse Road near Morne Croix and an immature DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE near Morne Bleu.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, three large macaws thought to be SCARLET MACAWS* were seen in flight near Blanchisseuse in the evening of 21 January; the following day, a single SCARLET MACAW was noted at the same locality in the evening. Although the origin of these birds remains suspect, the gradually increasing number of macaws in the vicinity is intriguing.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, a SPOTTED RAIL* and one of the recently released BLUE-AND-YELLOW MACAWS* were seen at Nariva Swamp on 22 January. Also noted were several PLAIN ANTVIREOS exhibiting courtship displays.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* continues to be seen, with the latest report from Waterloo on 24 January. Further observation revealed that its aberrant bill has a red rather than black ring near the tip. Gulls are best observed at low tide, when they congregate on the mudflats. No gulls were present at either Waterloo or Orange Field during low tide on 21 January.

At Chacachacare Island, an attempt to relocate the SWAINSON'S HAWK* during the early afternoon of 23 January was unsuccessful, though it was rather windy. No other unusual birds were noted. Two of the birders who reported hearing the Swainson's Hawk during 12-13 January were interviewed independently and each gave a fine imitation of the calls of a Swainson's Hawk, plus calls of other potentially confusing species, providing strong evidence that the bird is still wintering on the island.

In Tobago, a CARIBBEAN COOT* and a YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA* were observed in late December/early January.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Unlike the White-bearded Manakin, whose display courts are visible as small clearings on the forest floor, the Golden-headed Manakin males display high in the forest canopy. A lek typically comprises 6-12 males. Displays include a variety of movements, including wing flicks and a rapid backward "slide" (resembling Michael Jackson dancing) along a branch. The males also leave the perch during display flights with an S-shaped trajectory.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert -No. 2000-05

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-05) for 4 February 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Along the east coast of Trinidad, a systematically estimated 10,000 DICKCISSELS were noted flying about Kernahan Trace, Nariva Swamp, on 2 February; interviews with local farmers on 22 January indicated that they were not present at the time. The birds are best viewed at dusk, when they swarm prior to settling down at a colonial roost. Two adult AZURE GALLINULES were also noted at the same locality on 2 February.

At Waterloo, along the west coast of Trinidad, LAUGHING GULL numbers seem to be increasing, with 726 tallied on 31 January and 249, plus a distant flock of >1000 at sea, on 1 February. A large, unidentified immature gull was briefly seen on 31 January and an unusual concentration of 185 WHIMBRELS was noted at Waterloo on 1 February.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: The T&TFNC Bird Group is sponsoring a bird-banding workshop in an abandoned cocoa plantation at Paria Springs on Sunday, 13 February. To participate in the workshop, you must call Courtenay Rooks at 622-8826, Carol Ramjohn at 662-3569, or Floyd Hayes at 662-5918.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: The Blue-backed Manakin on Tobago displays in small groups of males, but when a female arrives, two birds typically alternate jumping and vocalize nearly in unison; eventually the display becomes circular as the perched male slides forward under the backward-jumping bird. Presumably only one dominant male mates with the female; this occurs in other manakins of the genus *Chiroxiphia*. Studies should be conducted to determine whether the subordinate male is related to the dominant male, in which case it may benefit by cooperating, or whether it is a tutorial relationship in which the subordinate male eventually becomes a dominant male.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert -No. 2000-06

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-06) for 18 February 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: The increase in gull numbers wintering along the west coast of Trinidad has been accompanied by an increase in rarities. On 5 February, only 325 LAUGHING GULLS were present at Waterloo, but 1,305 were tallied at Orange Valley, where the 1st- winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* was also seen. On 11 February, a BLACK-HEADED GULL* (1st for T&T since 1994) was reported from Waterloo. On 12 February, two 1st-winter BLACK-HEADED GULLS* and the 1st-winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* were found among 1,385 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo, while three LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS*, including a 2nd-winter immature, a 3rd-winter immature and the adult with the aberrant bill colouration, were found among 1,635 LAUGHING GULLS at Orange Valley. The occurrence of four different Lesser Black-backed Gulls in a single day ties the previous high count for Trinidad; the "grand slam" of four different age classes was unprecedented. Subsequent reports of LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* include sightings of the adult and an immature at Orange Valley on 13 February, and the 1st-winter immature at Orange Valley on 15 February.

Other noteworthy birds seen along the west coast include a MARBLED GODWIT* (1st for the season) at Orange Valley on both 5 and 12 February, and a GULL-BILLED TERN (2nd winter record for T&T) at Waterloo on 12 February.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWKS and a pair of HEPATIC TANAGERS were seen at the communication towers near Morne Bleu at dawn on 13 February. The rain-shortened T&TFNC bird- banding workshop, attended by 12 participants at Paria Springs on 13 February, netted 35 birds. Our first report of STREAKED FLYCATCHER, which appears to be migratory, for the season was from Maracas Valley on 10 February, though it is now widespread.

In Barbados, the first breeding activities of LITTLE EGRET for the season began on 14 February, when a pair was noted nest building.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Check back next week...

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-07

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-07) for 25 February 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Trinidad, DICKCISSEL numbers have increased spectacularly, with recent sightings of small flocks at scattered localities including Caroni, Todd's Road and Waterloo; at the latter locality, flocks have been seen flying eastward just a few hundred m east of the coast, suggesting direct arrival from Venezuela. An estimated 40,000 to 50,000 individuals--the largest numbers estimated in several decades--have been roosting at Nariva Swamp, where they were last reported on 21 February. To see the roost, drive into Kernahen Trace and proceed through the marshes until the road climbs a hill; park between two large, dead trees and scan the marshes below. The birds arrive between 5:15 and 5:45 pm. We would appreciate receiving further reports of Dickcissels.

Disturbingly few RED-BELLIED MACAWS, usually no more than a couple dozen, are being seen at Nariva Swamp in the evenings; the large, traditional roost in the Royal Palms along Manzanilla Beach appears to have been abandoned. A GREAT BLUE HERON was reported on 21 February. Elsewhere along the east coast of Trinidad, two SWALLOW- TAILED KITES, our first reports of the season, were noted south of Matura on 20 February.

Rare gulls continue to be seen along the west coast of Trinidad, although their movements are unpredictable. On 19 February, the 1st- winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* was noted among 100 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo, but no rarities were present among 800 LAUGHING GULLS at Orange Valley. On 22 February, the adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* and the two 1st-winter BLACK-HEADED GULLS* reappeared among the LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo. Presumably the same MARBLED GODWIT* seen at Orange Valley on 19 February turned up at Waterloo on 22 February. A single flock of 70 SOUTHERN LAPWINGS was noted at Orange Valley on 19 February. Farther north, a RINGED KINGFISHER was seen at Cacandee on 25 February.

Noteworthy bird sightings from the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad include a LITTLE EGRET* on 25 February, four LIMPKINS on 23 February and a BANK SWALLOW* picked out among 200 BARN SWALLOWS on 19 February. Recent sightings at the Aripo Livestock Station include a COCOI HERON and a LITTLE CUCKOO on 21 February, and a male RUDDY- BREASTED SEEDEATER* plus a partially leucistic CARIB GRACKLE with white feathers in one wing on 20 February.

In the suburban Port of Spain area, PEARL KITES continue to nest in the Casuarina "Pines" at Diego Martin, where a dark-phased SHORT- TAILED HAWK was ambushed by two PEARL KITES on 18 February. A female BLUE-TAILED EMERALD was carefully studied at the Hilton Hotel on 21 February.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO was reported from the Asa Wright Nature Centre. A mist-netting trip to Paria Springs on 20 February netted a BROWN VIOLETEAR plus several noteworthy bird observations, including a black-phased HOOK-BILLED KITE carefully studied at Paria Springs, two singing ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSHES between Las Lapas and Brasso Seco Junction, two SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWKS and a female HEPATIC TANAGER at Morne Bleu, and a partially leucistic HOUSE WREN with a whitish head at the large christophine plantation in Arima Valley. Also on 20 February the first RED-EYED VIREO reported for the season turned up at the Asa Wright Nature Centre. On 6 February, a pair of HEPATIC TANAGERS and a pair of SUMMER TANAGERS plus two immatures were noted at Morne Bleu.

Following up on a few anecdotal observations last year of extraparental care in the TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD, researchers have been documenting this phenomenon on a colour-banded population at Caribbean Union College in Maracas Valley. Two colour-banded females, each mated to and nesting with different colour-banded males last year in adjacent territories, teamed up to feed a single nestling in a nest. Observations during 18-21 February revealed female RY/RY, thought to be the mother, making 57 provisioning trips to the nest while female WR/WR, from the adjacent territory, made 52 trips and the unbanded male made only 9 trips; the nestling fledged on 22 February. Meanwhile another colour-banded pair was being assisted by an unbanded bird of unknown sex thought to be an offspring from an earlier brood; on 20 February, the female made 9 trips to the young, the male 5 trips, and the unbanded bird 3 trips. Extensive studies of parental care in this population during 1997 revealed that both sexes contribute equally to providing food for the offspring; no instances of extraparental care (cooperative breeding) were observed during 1997 or 1998. Cooperative breeding is unreported in the closely related and well studied Northern Mockingbird, but has been reported in the more distantly related Galapagos Mockingbird.

We wrap up the Trinidad reports by announcing that 211 species were recorded during the 1999 Christmas Bird Count, exceeding the previous high of 198 species during the 1998 count.

On Tobago, two nests of BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHERS, including one with four eggs, were noted only 200 metres apart in white mangroves at the Hilton Hotel on 14 February. Also present were a dozen ANHINGAS at the lake.

On Barbados, the four possible immature YELLOW-LEGGED GULLS and immature HERRING GULL were still lingering as of 20 February. What appears to be a basic-plumaged PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER, representing on the 2nd for Barbados and the Caribbean, was recently photographed among a collection of caged birds in Barbados, but the owner was unable to provide the date of capture. This species, which is most easily recognized in basic plumage, should be searched for among migrating flocks of American Golden-Plovers throughout the region.

Farther afield, a correspondent from Puerto Rico reported that an adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL with an aberrant yellow-tipped, blackish bill had been seen regularly in the harbor at Mayaguez between 26 January and 3 February, but not subsequently. Another observer reported immature LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS from the same locality. A 1st-winter BONAPARTE'S GULL has been frequenting the Mayaguez-Anasco area since 3 February.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: In addition to manakins, lekking has been reported in two species of hermit hummingbirds in Trinidad: the Green Hermit and the Little Hermit. In both species, males display from low, thin perches from which they sing throughout the day during much of the year. The tail is often pumped up and down while displaying and the bill opened, revealing a red gape. Aerial displays also occur. Females visit the leks to mate.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-08

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-08) for 3 March 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: An odd-looking large gull, thought to be a 1st-winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL*, turned up among a guesstimated 3000 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo on 27 February; it was relocated among a guesstimated 2000 LAUGHING GULLS at Orange Valley on 1 March. Its main distinction was the presence of a large white patch on the upper surface of each wing, in the vicinity of the outermost greater secondary coverts; presumably the coverts were moulting, thus exposing the basal shafts of the outermost secondaries (further scrutiny of the primaries did not reveal the pale window characteristic of Herring/Yellow-legged Gulls). This bird represents the fifth presumed Lesser Black-backed Gull of the season for Trinidad. A breeding-plumaged BLACK-HEADED GULL* (3rd for the year) also turned up among the gulls at Orange Valley on 1 March. Other birds seen at Waterloo include three GREAT BLUE HERONS, the 1st-winter GULL-BILLED TERN and the first two LARGE-BILLED TERNS of the season on 27 February. Elsewhere along the west coast of Trinidad, an excursion into Caroni Swamp on 26 February produced a COCOI HERON, four BLUE-WINGED TEAL, a MERLIN and a COMMON POTOO.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, DICKCISSEL numbers appear to be declining, with an estimated 10,000-15,000 arriving at their roost in Nariva Swamp on 26 February. To see the roost, drive into Kernahen Trace and proceed through the marshes until the road climbs a hill; park between two large, dead trees and scan the marshes below. The birds arrive between 5:15 and 5:45 pm. We would appreciate receiving further reports of Dickcissels throughout the country.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a female BLACKPOLL WARBLER was reported from Mt. St. Benedict on 29 February. We received a late report from an experienced birder of a YELLOW GROSBEAK* (1st for T&T; possibly an escaped cagebird?) seen at the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 8 November.

On Barbados, the four possible immature YELLOW-LEGGED GULLS and immature HERRING GULL were still lingering as of 27 February.

CORRIGENDA OF SCBA 2000-07: 1100 LAUGHING GULLS, not 100, were at Waterloo on 19 February. The BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO reported from the Asa Wright Nature Centre was seen on 25 February.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 16 April, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to northeastern Trinidad. We will begin with an early morning walk above Grande Riviere, in search of the endangered Trinidad Piping-Guan. Afterward we will be searching for migrant waterbirds and landbirds at Galera Point. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826). If interested in lodging overnight at Grande Riviere, where nesting Leatherback Turtles can be closely observed, you may contact Hotel Mt. Plaisir (tel. 670-0057/8381) for reservations.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Although lekking is well known among hermit hummingbirds, it also appears to be widespread among sabrewing hummingbirds, including the White-tailed Sabrewing in Tobago. At least three leks, comprising up to four displaying males, can be encountered along Gilpin Trace. The males typically sing throughout the day, though most actively in the early morning and late afternoon, from perches in the midstorey. Typically one male sings more frequently than the other(s). Recent mist-netting studies have revealed that up to four females and five satellite males may visit a lek in a day. One banded male had been displaying at the same lek for at least 2.5 years. Lekking occurs year-round and the lek sites have been stable since at least 1995.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, grahamlwhite@hotmail.com.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-09

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-09) for 10 March 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In northeastern Trinidad, up to four TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS are reportedly being seen daily since January at Grande Riviere, 1 km up the Monte Video Road. According to local residents, they were more elusive during June-December 1999, much as they were during this period in 1998. Our most recent report is of three birds seen on 5 March. Elsewhere, one was seen along the Sangre Grande/Grande Riviere Road several km south of Grande Riviere on 2 March, and two were seen along the paved road between Grande Riviere and Shark River on 24 February. A 50 minute seabird watch at Galera Point on 4 March was disappointing, producing only 9 BROWN PELICANS and 13 MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS. Noteworthy birds seen on 5 March include: three SWALLOW-TAILED KITES in the final stages of nest building at Montevideo, about 150 metres northwest of the tree with the mixed CRESTED OROPENDOLA and YELLOW-RUMPED CACIQUE colonies; two other SWALLOW-TAILED KITES seen at Sans Souci and one at Matura; and a male BELTED KINGFISHER on the electrical wires hanging over the sea 1.8 km east of Sans Souci, possibly representing the same bird seen for the third consecutive spring.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, an estimated 20,000-30,000 DICKCISSELS were seen arriving at a roost near the southern edge of Nariva Swamp on 5 March (see previous alerts for directions). Earlier in the day 300 were noted at Caltoo Trace, along the northern edge of Nariva Swamp. A COMMON PARAQUE was photographed as it incubated two pinkish eggs at the entrance to Bush Bush on 29 February.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a white-necked, white-headed heron reported as having a "dark grey cap; no plumes" was seen at the Aripo Livestock Station on 4 March. The observers thought it might be a GREY HERON* (two previous T&T records, one from each island). This species has a light grey crown surrounded by blacker lateral stripes in immatures and a white crown with black lateral stripes in adults. Although the COCOI HERON is generally depicted as having a solid black crown, the forecrown is dark grey in immatures (e.g., see comments on immature Cocoi Heron photographed at Fullarton Swamp, Trinidad, in SCBA 1999-32, 1999-34) and in some non-breeding plumaged adults (e.g., photograph by Roger Neckles). Furthermore, the neck and bill are proportionately longer and the head proportionately bigger than that of the Grey Heron. The bird seen on 4 March was most likely a COCOI HERON, which has been reported from the area as recently as 21 February, but should be searched for and further scrutinized nevertheless. In the Caroni Rice Fields, a hundred DICKCISSELS were heard on 2 March and a hundred were seen flying north on 25 February.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a trip to Caroni Swamp on 7 March produced a COMMON POTOO and a PEREGRINE FALCON. A few seemingly white-rumped, white-bellied immature ibises among the "incoming" roosting SCARLET IBISES could have been WHITE IBISES*, but more thorough views are required to confirm their identity. Surprisingly no rare gulls were noted on 5 March among 1372 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo and 1300 at Orange Valley. However, a MARBLED GODWIT* was noted at Orange Valley on 5 March and an unprecedented concentration of 62 YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS was recorded at Waterloo on 5 March.

On 4 March, a male GREEN-THROATED MANGO was carefully studied with a male BLACK-THROATED MANGO in a non-mangrove residential area of Waterloo; also present were single unidentified female and immature mangoes, a male WHITE-NECKED JACOBIN and a DICKCISSEL. Other noteworthy landbird sightings include a MANGROVE CUCKOO and a STRIPED CUCKOO at Caroni Swamp on 4 March, a male RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPER at Waterloo on 27 February and a male WHITE-NECKED JACOBIN along Todd's Road on 8 February. The latter two records of White-necked Jacobin along with three others during 1998-1999 (see previous SCBAs) reflect an emerging pattern of vagrancy in the lowlands of Trinidad during the dry season.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the first SWALLOW TANAGER of the season was seen at Morne Bleu on 5 March and the first PIRATIC FLYCATCHERS of the season for northern Trinidad were reported from Maracas Valley on 26 February. In Maracas Valley, researchers continue to document cooperative breeding in the TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD at Caribbean Union College. On 6 March, extraparental care was confirmed at a third territory in which two colour-banded females and an unbanded male were seen feeding two medium-sized nestlings, but by the following day the nestlings disappeared. Intriguingly both females were seen feeding young in the same territory last year, though only one incubated the eggs; meanwhile last year's colour-banded male apparently abandoned its territory and now appears to be staking out a territory elsewhere on campus while a replacement male moved into his former territory. On 7 March, cooperative breeding was documented in a fourth territory in which two females and a male, all colour-banded, participated in nest building; the resident female was nesting for the fourth consecutive year, but the other female was banded last year, when it was suspected of assisting the territorial pair in parental care.

It remains puzzling why a female would forego reproduction to help out another pair raise offspring for a second consecutive year; bigamy, in which the male mates and raises offspring with both females, would seem a more practical option. Cooperative breeding is rare in birds but is well documented among certain species in which the "helpers" are genetically related (usually older siblings) to the assisted offspring. DNA "fingerprinting" using DNA extracted from feather samples of all three adults plus a young in one of the cooperatively breeding territories should document whether this is the case with the Tropical Mockingbird. It also remains puzzling why cooperative breeding is absent in temperate mockingbirds but present in at least a few tropical species.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 16 April, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to northeastern Trinidad. We will begin with an early morning walk above Grande Riviere, in search of the endangered Trinidad Piping-Guan. Afterward we will be searching for migrant waterbirds and landbirds at Galera Point. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826). If interested in lodging overnight at Grande Riviere, where nesting Leatherback Turtles can be closely observed, you may contact Hotel Mt. Plaisir (tel. 670-0057/8381) for reservations.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Males of the Bearded Bellbird also displays in leks, with 3-4 birds at a lek in Trinidad. Vocal display perches, from which loud "bock" calls are emitted, occur in the forest midstorey or canopy. When males meet, they jump from branch to branch on a sapling, showing off their black-and-white plumage, brown crown, fanned tail, dangling fleshy wattles and exposed skin of the thighs. As the displays intensify the birds move down the sapling, with the dominant bird occupying the lower position. A

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-10

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-10) for 17 March 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the saga of cooperatively breeding Tropical Mockingbirds at Caribbean Union College continues to take new twists. On 16 March, researchers confirmed for the first time that two different colour-banded females were incubating eggs on the same nest (constructed by both females and a male); three eggs were in the nest at 8:15 a.m. and four eggs at 3:50 p.m. (are more forthcoming?). An obvious question is whether the eggs were laid by one or both females. The question can be answered through genetic tests of the offspring's blood or feather tissues, which should be obtained (without harming the birds) if the eggs hatch. Last year the same trio was present at a nest with an exceptionally large clutch of five eggs, which disappeared before hatching; another clutch of five from a different trio produced nestlings, but the nest was inaccessible and all nestlings died. If indeed the male mated with both females, why would they place all their eggs in one "basket"?

Other noteworthy bird sightings from the Northern Range include a seemingly lost SPOTTED SANDPIPER captured in a mist-net on the campus of Caribbean Union College on 16 March, a SWALLOW TANAGER at Las Lapas on 12 March and a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER near Paria Springs on 11 March (latest date for T&T?).

Along the east coast of Trinidad, observers reported three "mile- long ribbons" of DICKCISSELS arriving at their roost in Nariva Swamp (see earlier alerts for directions) between 5:25 and 5:40 p.m. on 14 March. The flocks were greeted by a hungry MERLIN. Estimates of DICKCISSEL numbers ranged from 100,000 (a conservative estimate according to an individual involved with population estimates earlier this year) to 200,000 birds. Obviously significant numbers have wandered across from Venezuela this year. We would appreciate further reports of Dickcissels from Nariva Swamp and elsewhere. Birders throughout the Caribbean should be alert for vagrants migrating northward.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, five SWALLOW-TAILED KITES were seen on 7 March and seven on 6 March between Grande Riviere and Montevideo. A pair of COMMON BLACK-HAWKS was seen mating while perched in branches of an "almond" tree along the beach at Grande Riviere on 7 March.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an adult male GREEN-THROATED MANGO was seen along with an adult male BLACK-THROATED MANGO plus three female/immature mangoes of conjectural identity in an urban habitat at Waterloo on 12 March. An active breeding colony of SNOWY EGRETS and CATTLE EGRETS was found and three GRAY-NECKED WOOD-RAILS seen roosting on mangrove branches at Oropouche on 7 March. On 10 March, a boat trip into Caroni Swamp produced two COMMON POTOOS and a PYGMY KINGFISHER.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 16 April, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to northeastern Trinidad. We will begin with an early morning walk above Grande Riviere, meeting at 7:00 a.m. by the Pawi viewing site 1 km up the Monte Video Road. Afterward we will be searching for migrant waterbirds (bring along a telescope) and landbirds at Galera Point. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826). If interested in lodging overnight at Grande Riviere, where nesting Leatherback Turtles can be leisurely observed, you may contact Hotel Mt. Plaisir (tel. 670- 0057/8381) for reservations.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Is vagrancy in birds scientifically important? In nearly all organisms, postnatal dispersal is highly leptokurtic (positively skewed) in distribution, meaning that a small proportion of individuals disperses much farther than average. Long-distance dispersalists render a crucial role in the geographical expansion of populations. A recent study (Veit, R. R. 2000. Vagrants as the expanding fringe of a growing population. *Auk* 117:242-246.) found that the incidence of vagrancy to Massachusetts by five species of birds breeding in western North America was significantly correlated with reproductive success based on 21-23 years of Breeding Bird Survey data. Vagrants appeared more frequently during the year following large population growth and were less frequent during the year following a population decline. The establishment of a link between vagrancy and reproductive success indicates that records of vagrant birds comprise a useful tool for modeling avian population dynamics.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, grahamlwhite@hotmail.com.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-11

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-11) for 24 March 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Barbados, a GIANT COWBIRD (1st for Barbados and West Indies) of undetermined sex was seen with a flock of CARIB GRACKLES along the south coast on 9 March. However, efforts to relocate it have been unsuccessful. As of 19 March, two of the probable YELLOW-LEGGED GULLS and the HERRING GULL still lingered at Pile Bay, St. Michael. An impressive concentration of shorebirds at Congo Road on 29 March included an AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (rare in spring), a SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER, 13 STILT SANDPIPERS, 40 GREATER YELLOWLEGS and 12 LESSER YELLOWLEGS. On 11 March, the 2nd-winter GREY HERON was seen along with 13 GREAT BLUE HERONS at Graeme Hall Swamp.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a 1st-winter immature BLACK-HEADED GULL* was seen among 2,159 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo on 23 March. A possible SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHER* was glimpsed in mangroves at Claxton Bay on 21 March, far north of its northernmost occurrence. Highlights of a trip to Caroni Swamp on 14 March included a GREAT BLUE HERON, AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS and a COMMON SNIPE.

In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, 300 DICKCISSELS were noted on 23 March in a patch of bamboo on the eastern edge and two PINNATED BITTERNS were noted. On 18 March, ten LIMPKINS, a PINNATED BITTERN, a PEREGRINE FALCON, a GREATER YELLOWLEGS (only shorebird seen) and a heavily oiled CATTLE EGRET were seen. Another ten LIMPKINS were seen on 14 March.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, a GREAT BLUE HERON, a PYGMY KINGFISHER and a BELTED KINGFISHER were noted along the Mitan River on 21 March.

At Caribbean Union College in the Northern Range of Trinidad, a fifth egg was added on 17 March to the TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD nest with two incubating females (reported in last week's alert), providing further evidence that both females laid eggs in the nest. Within the past week all three adults in another cooperatively breeding trio were confirmed nest building. A thorough survey of the mockingbird population on the campus revealed that of ten colour-banded territorial males last year, seven remain on their territories, two moved to a new territory and one disappeared. Of 12 colour-banded territorial females last year, eight remain on their territories, two moved to a new territory and two disappeared. Estimates of adult annual survivorship (based on four breeding seasons) are 79% for males (19 bird-years) and 72% for females (32 bird-years). Such high survivorship rates, which are conservative because adults moving to territories off the campus cannot be accounted for, are consistent with other species of tropical birds. Unfortunately no comparable data are available for temperate species of mockingbirds.

Finally, we received word that the banded COMMON TERN recovered at Little Rockly Bay, Tobago, on 25 October 1999 (reported in SCBA 1999- 40) was banded as a fledgling by Jeff A. Spendelow near Madison, Connecticut, USA, on 16 June 1986; thus, the bird was 13 years and 4 months old, but older individuals have been recovered in Trinidad.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 16 April, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to northeastern Trinidad. We will begin with an early morning walk above Grande Riviere, meeting at 7:00 a.m. by the Pawi viewing site 1 km up the Monte Video Road. Afterward we will be searching for migrant waterbirds (bring along a telescope) and landbirds at Galera Point. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826). If interested in lodging overnight at Grande Riviere, where nesting Leatherback Turtles can be leisurely observed, you may contact Hotel Mt. Plaisir (tel. 670- 0057/8381) for reservations.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Is the "Chivi Vireo" a valid species? The Red-eyed Vireo "superspecies" complex comprises several distinct groups, including North American "Red-eyed" (*olivaceus*), Central American "Yellow-green" (*flavoviridis*), West Indian "Black-whiskered" (*altiloquus*) and South American "Chivi" (*chivi*) vireos (plus a few less widespread groups). Genetic studies by N. K. Johnson and R. M. Zink (1985. Genetic evidence for relationships in the avian family Vireonidae. *Condor* 90:428-445) and by Johnson, Zink and J. A. Marten (1988. Genetic evidence for relationships in the avian family Vireonidae. *Condor* 90:428-445) used starch gel electrophoresis to analyse variation at up to 29 genetic loci in 32 taxa, including 20 species in four genera, of Vireonidae. The sample from the "Red-eyed" group included 15 specimens from Minnesota and the sample from the "Chivi" group included 22 specimens from Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay. Stay tuned next week for the conclusions of the study...

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, grahamlwhite@hotmail.com

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-12

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-12) for 31 March 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In northwestern Trinidad, an unidentified immature hawk, thought possibly to be a BROAD-WINGED HAWK* (no records for T&T), was photographed at Morne Catherine on 14 March. At Diego Martin, PEARL KITES have already nested twice this year, with three eggs in the first clutch and two in the second.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two pairs of GREAT BLACK-HAWKS appeared to be engaged in a territorial dispute over Morne Bleu on 11 March; a single bird was noted again on 14 March. At Las Lapas, five different COLLARED TROGONS were noted on 14 and 26 March. A LESSER SWALLOW-TAILED SWIFT nest was found in the Arima Valley along the Blanchisseuse Road, near a waterfall below the Asa Wright Nature Centre, on 11 March. At Caribbean Union College, all five eggs of a cooperatively breeding TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD trio hatched from 27-29 March, but three nestlings have already died. A monogamous pair in an adjacent territory is incubating three eggs in the same nest used in May 1999 (sheltered under the eaves of a building) and a cooperatively breeding trio is nesting in the same nest used for its previous brood. Nest reuse occurs rarely in mockingbirds, perhaps to avoid parasites such as blowflies; in four cases thus far, only nests in which offspring were successfully fledged were reused.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 DICKCISSELS were noted flying to their roost at Nariva Swamp on 25 March.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, birders at Pitch Lake tallied 30 different OSPREYS on 15 March, beating their previous record of 18.

On Grenada, a brief survey of the critically endangered endemic subspecies of the HOOK-BILLED KITE produced 14-16 different individuals, mostly in the southwestern part of the island, during 22-28 February.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 16 April, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to northeastern Trinidad. We will begin with an early morning walk above Grande Riviere, meeting at 7:00 a.m. by the Pawi viewing site 1 km up the Monte Video Road. Afterward we will be searching for migrant waterbirds (bring along a telescope) and landbirds at Galera Point. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826). If interested in lodging overnight at Grande Riviere, where nesting Leatherback Turtles can be leisurely observed, you may contact Hotel Mt. Plaisir (tel. 670- 0057/8381) for reservations.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Is the "Chivi Vireo" a valid species? Last week we cited a few studies whose conclusions are succinctly summarised in pg. 438 of the American Ornithologists' Union's 7th edition of the Check-list of North American Birds (published in 1998), which states that the Red-eyed and Chivi vireos "are sometimes regarded as separate species because of a wide hiatus in distribution, but recent biochemical studies (Johnson and Zink 1985) indicate that chivi (Vieillot, 1817) [Chivi Vireo] and olivaceus [Red-eyed Vireo] are closely related and presumably conspecific..." The weak differentiation between North American "Red-eyed" and South American "Chivi" vireos was surprising given the strong differentiation of Central American "Yellow-green Vireo," currently recognised as a distinct species, from both forms. Until further evidence to the contrary is obtained, the Chivi Vireo should be considered conspecific with the Red-eyed Vireo.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, grahamlwhite@hotmail.com.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-13

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-13) for 7 April 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Rare gulls continue to lurk along the west coast of Trinidad. On 3 April, the adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* with the odd bill colouration and a first-winter immature LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* were spotted among LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo. Also present were a GULL-BILLED TERN and two "Cayenne" SANDWICH TERNS.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, we received a report without details of a SWAINSON'S FLYCATCHER* recently seen at Mt. St. Benedict. At Cumaca, two SWALLOW-TAILED KITES and a male WHITE-WINGED BECARD were noted on 2 April. At Cumaca Cave, famous for its large OILBIRD colony, birders were disturbed to find a dead nestling beside a noose made of twine on a rock just outside the cave entrance, plus a long bamboo pole inside the cave, on 2 April. The conservation-conscious owner of the cave had earlier found six dead young OILBIRDS plus a dead adult inside the cave. The caretaker reported that a gang of poachers from the village of Cumaca had carried away two bags full of dead OILBIRDS. We hope our readers are just as outraged as we are! What shall we do?

At Caribbean Union College in Maracas Valley, researchers have documented cooperative breeding in a fifth territory of TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRDS. In this case, however, the trio comprises two males and a female; furthermore, all are known to be unrelated since each was banded as a nestling or fledgling 2.5-3 years ago in separate, non-adjacent territories. The male thought to be the principal territory holder inherited the territory from its parents. The male thought to be assisting the breeding pair is partially crippled, lacking claws and possessing clubbed, swollen toes on its left foot. All three are currently feeding three nestlings. The same trio successfully fledged at least two broods last year, though cooperative food provisioning was not documented. Meanwhile, cooperative nest-building by two females and a male has now been documented on three different territories. The territorial female of a cooperatively breeding trio including an unbanded bird recently disappeared while building a nest and has since been replaced by a new female, now banded.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, thousands of DICKCISSELS were heard in the bamboo patch about 1-2 km southeast of the runway in the Caroni Rice Fields on 6 April. Other sightings from the relatively unproductive rice fields on 3 April include a PEREGRINE FALCON, three SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS, four GREATER YELLOWLEGS and a LESSER YELLOWLEGS. At Wallerfield, six WHITE-TAILED NIGHTJARS, four COMMON PAURAUQUES, two COMMON GROUND-DOVES and a MASKED YELLOWTHROAT were seen on 3 April.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an estimated 40,000 DICKCISSELS were seen roosting at Nariva Swamp on 1 April. Along the Manzanilla-Mayaro Road farther south, an amazing 3 metre long nest of the CRESTED OROPENDOLA can be seen beside nests only half as long at a colony on the left side of the road just south of the 54.5 kilometre post.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, a TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN* was seen at the Pawi viewing site at Grande Riviere on 1 April.

CORRIGENDA: The unidentified immature hawk reported from Morne Catherine in last week's alert was thought to possibly be a ROADSIDE HAWK* (nor records for T&T), not a BROAD-WINGED HAWK.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 16 April, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to northeastern Trinidad. We will begin with an early morning walk above Grande Riviere, meeting at 7:00 a.m. by the Pawi viewing site 1 km up the Monte Video Road. Afterward we will be searching for migrant waterbirds (bring along a telescope) and landbirds at Galera Point. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826). If interested in lodging overnight at Grande Riviere, where nesting Leatherback Turtles can be leisurely observed, you may contact Hotel Mt. Plaisir (tel. 670- 0057/8381) for reservations.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why do temperate birds lay larger clutches (number of eggs in a nest) than tropical birds? A plethora of hypotheses have been proposed, several of which we shall review. One such hypothesis, developed by David Lack and referred to as "Lack's Hypothesis," is that clutch size has evolved to that which the most young are raised on average. In nidicolous species, which remain in the nest long after hatching, the limit is set by the amount of food which the parents can bring for their young; in nidifugous species, which leave the nest shortly after hatching, the limit is set by the average amount of food available for the laying female, modified by the size of the egg. Clutches are larger at higher latitudes because birds have more hours per day during the breeding season to gather food for their young than do birds in the tropics, and can therefore feed larger broods.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, grahamlwhite@hotmail.com.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-14

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-14) for 14 April 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: The best vantage point in Trinidad for seeing seabirds is Galera Point, the island's northeastern tip, which appears to be most productive in spring as seabirds migrate northward. A one-hour seabird watch in the afternoon of 8 April produced a light-phased adult RED-FOOTED BOOBY* (2nd for Trinidad), plus an adult BROWN BOOBY, a probable PARASITIC JAEGER* chasing a few of the estimated 40 MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS present, about 75 BROWN PELICANS, four ROSEATE TERNS and a ROYAL TERN. A quarter-hour seabird watch on 9 April produced just ten MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS, 20 BROWN PELICANS and 17 ROSEATE TERNS. Vagrant landbirds also have a knack for showing up at Galera Point. On 9 April, a male CARIBBEAN MARTIN* (2nd for Trinidad)--possibly the same individual recorded last spring--joined five GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS repeatedly swooping for insects between the lighthouse and the rocks of the point.

Elsewhere in northeastern Trinidad, three TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS* were seen at the traditional "Pawi" site 1.0 km south of Grande Riviere on 10 April, and one was seen during a brief visit to the same spot on 9 April. None could be found during a long hike up to and along the ridges southwest of the Pawi site on 9 April, but a couple of calling COLLARED TROGONS were the first recorded in the area. At nearby Montevideo, ten SWALLOW-TAILED KITES, including one carrying nest material, were noted on 10 April, and two COMMON BLACK-HAWKS were seen mating in a tree on 8 April.

After all but disappearing a month ago, rare gulls have been reappearing in remarkable numbers along the west coast of Trinidad. At Waterloo, LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* are suddenly common, with up to four seen as recently as 12 April (latest date for T&T; four also seen on 11 April) among roughly 1000 LAUGHING GULLS. These birds include the adult with the abnormal dark ring at the tip of the bill (present since 9 January), a new adult with normal bill colouration (6th different Lesser Black-backed Gull of the year), and single 2nd- winter/summer and 3rd-winter/summer immatures (presumably the same as those seen earlier in the year). An emerging pattern of new Lesser Black-backed Gulls appearing in T&T during late March to early April suggests the arrival of migrants from farther south. On 11 April, a 1st-winter/summer BLACK-HEADED GULL* was also seen among the gulls.

At the Aripo Livestock Station in north-central Trinidad, a COCOI HERON and the first two FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS of the year were seen on 9 April. Along the east coast of Trinidad, DICKCISSEL concentrations continue to impress birders visiting Nariva Swamp, where an estimated 50,000 to 75,000 flocked to their roosting site on 8 April.

In northern Trinidad, the cooperatively breeding trio of TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRDS comprising two males and a female was scrutinised more carefully during the week at Caribbean Union College. Both males are missing toes and claws on one foot, and the 2.5-year-old male thought to be the principle territorial male is in the worst condition of the two, with an apparently blind eye, a misshaped lower bill and numerous fleas that have apparently been transferred to the young in the nest (when captured a year ago it was healthy). That two unfit males continue defending a territory without being abandoned by the female seems remarkable. Meanwhile, shared incubation was confirmed in a second trio comprising two females and a male, with four eggs in the nest when last checked. The male was seen mating earlier with the female possessing the territory for the second consecutive year; although she incubates mope than the other female, we wonder whether the other female also mated with the male and contributed eggs (last year the second female nested independently with another male on an adjacent territory). We neglected to mention in an earlier alert that a RUFOUS NIGHTJAR was heard calling in the hills above Caribbean Union College on 29 March.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 16 April, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to northeastern Trinidad. We will begin with an early morning walk above Grande Riviere, meeting at 7:00 a.m. by the Pawi viewing site 1 km up the Monte Video Road. Afterward we will be searching for migrant waterbirds (bring along a telescope) and landbirds at Galera Point. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826). If interested in lodging overnight at Grande Riviere, where nesting Leatherback Turtles can be leisurely observed, you may contact Hotel Mt. Plaisir (tel. 670- 0057/8381) for reservations.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why do temperate birds lay larger clutches than tropical birds? Ashmole noted that day length at middle latitudes was about 1.5 times as long as in tropical latitudes, but that clutch size averaged twice as large, and suggested that some factor other than day length alone (Lack's hypothesis, discussed last week) enabled temperate species to rear larger broods. Because mortality should be higher during the non-breeding (winter) season at temperate latitudes than at tropical latitudes, Ashmole reasoned that temperate bird populations were relatively low in proportion to the food supply during the breeding season, thereby enabling them to rear large broods. In contrast, tropical bird populations remained near the carrying capacity allowed by the food supply, thus limiting them to rearing smaller broods. Support for Ashmole's hypothesis was provided by Lack and Moreau (Oiseau Rev. Fr. Ornithol. 35(spec. no.):76-89, 1965), whose study of birds nesting in tropical Africa found that clutch sizes averaged a half egg larger in more seasonal savanna habitats than in forest habitats.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-15

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-15) for 21 April 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Along the north coast of Trinidad, a two- hour search for TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS* on 16 April at Grande Riviere by participants of the T&TFNC birding trip produced only one bird heard as it flew away. According to the local residents, only four birds are being seen regularly, and they appear to be more skittish than during previous years. We were disturbed to discover that 4-5 hectares of land had been recently cleared for agriculture within the known territory of the resident piping-guans. We were also told that the plucked feathers of a piping-guan were found beside a shotgun shell in the hills above the area during Carnival (early March).

At nearby Galera Point, the male CARIBBEAN MARTIN* (2nd for T&T) was seen with six presumed GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS on 16 April. Despite strong winds and high seas, a one-hour seabird watch produced two presumed LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS among the more usual seabirds on 16 April, and a seemingly bewildered GREAT BLUE HERON was seen flying low over the nearby fields. At Blanchisseuse, a SPECTACLED OWL was seen along the coast on 17 April. And at Petit Carib, several weeks ago an OILBIRD was found roosting in a tree just above a stream with a pile of regurgitated fruit seeds underneath.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a hike from Heights of Aripo to the Aripo Caves on 21 April produced a TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN* (presumably the same individual seen at 7:15 and 10:30 a.m.), about 25 OILBIRDS at the entrance to the caves, a GREEN HERMIT lek, a GRAY-THROATED LEAFTOSSER (heard only), a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER and two ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSHES (heard only). On 20 April, an OLIVE-STRIPED FLYCATCHER* was captured and banded at Paria Springs. On 7 April, a male SCARLET TANAGER* turned up at Mt. St. Benedict. On 4 April, a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER was seen at Las Lapas. We received a late report of a RUFOUS-SHAFTED WOODSTAR* seen at Morne Bleu on 1 March.

At Caribbean Union College in Maracas Valley, researchers were stunned to discover seven eggs in a TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD nest on 14 April; the eggs were incubated by two colour-banded females and were almost certainly laid by both birds, providing the strongest evidence thus far for cooperative communal polygyny in the species. To our knowledge the only other suspected incidence of two female mockingbirds laying eggs in the same nest comprises an old report by Marchant of eight eggs in a Long-tailed Mockingbird nest in Ecuador. The clutch of five eggs reported earlier and thought to have been laid by two different females produced only a single fledgling, which seems to have disappeared.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, surprising numbers of Eurasian gull vagrants continue to linger with five different LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* (highest count for T&T) noted among 1200 LAUGHING GULLS on 20 April (latest date for T&T), including three adults (a new one, representing the 7th different bird of the year, had some black on the outermost tail feathers) and two immatures (2nd- and 3rd-winter birds). An immature-plumaged BLACK-HEADED GULL* was also noted on 20 April. On 6 April, noteworthy sightings included a 1st-winter immature LESSER BLACK- BACKED GULL*, a lingering MARBLED GODWIT* (latest date for T&T), and a lingering 1st-winter GULL-BILLED TERN. At Cacandee, two pairs of CLAPPER RAILS and ten GREATER ANIS were noted on 14 April. At Pointe-a-Pierre, two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS and a GRAY- NECKED WOOD-RAIL were seen on 14 April.

Recent sightings from the Caroni Plain of Trinidad include: the first two FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS of the season on 8 April; a SPECTACLED OWL at Arena Forest on 5 April; a WHITE-TAILED GOLDENTHROAT at Wallerfield on 5 April; two COCOI HERONS at the Aripo Livestock Station on 3 April; and a BANK SWALLOW* at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 1 April.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, the hordes of DICKCISSELS roosting at Kernahan in Nariva Swamp finally appear to be heading northward. An estimated 100,000 were seen returning to roost on 13 April, along with an APLOMADO FALCON*, but only 200 returned to the roost on 18 April. On 3 April, a STREAKED-HEADED WOODCREEPER was seen along the road south of Manzanilla and two PINNATED BITTERNS were noted at Kernahan.

We finish our Trinidad reports with a male WHITE-NECKED JACOBIN seen far from its normal montane haunts at Moruga, along the south coast, on 19 April.

In Barbados, five nestling LITTLE EGRETS have now been colour- banded in a project initiated by resident birders. On each nestling the left leg is banded with a USFWS aluminum band below the "knee" (actually ankle joint) and a red plastic band above the "knee"; the right leg is banded with a unique combination of coloured plastic bands above the "knee." In the future birders should be alert for banded Little Egrets dispersing throughout the region.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why do temperate birds lay larger clutches than tropical birds? As mentioned earlier, Lack believed the longer daylength in temperate climates provided birds with more time to provide food for their offspring, thus enabling them to raise larger broods. However, D. F. Owen (1977, pp. 171-179 in B. Stonehouse and C. Perrins [eds.], *Evolutionary Ecology*. University Park Press, Baltimore) pointed out that the clutch size of nocturnal birds and litter size of nocturnal mammals also increased with latitude. Because the nights were shorter in temperate climates, nocturnal animals had less time for providing food for their offspring, thus Lack's hypothesis could not be correct. Owen suggested that because species diversity is greater and species abundance is lower in the tropics, both diurnal and nocturnal species in the tropics should have more difficulty in developing a search image for appropriate food items than temperate species. He concluded that temperate species can raise more offspring than tropical species because they can find food more easily.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-16

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-16) for 28 April 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Because birders seldom venture out to sea in the southeastern Caribbean, much remains to be learned regarding the offshore distribution of seabirds within the region. From 18-24 April, a birder observed 774 seabirds representing 17 "pelagic" species and a few CATTLE EGRETS during four days of birding on a cruise aboard the MS Sunbird from Barbados to Antigua to St. Kitts to Aruba and back to Barbados. Highlights included: a RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD, 10 BROWN BOOBIES and 20 BRIDLED TERNS among the Leeward Islands on 18 April; a WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD, 120 RED-FOOTED BOOBIES, 14 BRIDLED TERNS, five SOOTY TERNS, two PARASITIC JAEGERs and an intermediate adult SOUTH POLAR SKUA between St. Kitts and Aruba on 21 April; five AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS, a LEACH'S STORM-PETREL, a BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL, a RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD, 50 RED-FOOTED BOOBIES, five MASKED BOOBIES, 20 BROWN BOOBIES and 20 BRIDLED TERNS east of Aruba on 23 April; and a BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL, an unidentified storm-petrel, 15 RED-FOOTED BOOBIES, a BROWN BOOBY, 400 BRIDLED TERNS, a SOOTY TERN and eight POMARINE JAEGERs west of Barbados on 24 April.

Much also remains to be learned about the region's breeding seabird colonies. During the last several years, MASKED BOOBIES* had been reported regularly from St. Giles Island, off northeastern Tobago. However, breeding had not been documented until researchers observed an adult feeding a nestling on 25 April. Other actively breeding seabird species included AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER, RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD, RED-FOOTED BOOBY and BROWN BOOBY. No MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD nests have been found yet.

Vagrant Eurasian gulls continue to linger at Waterloo, on the west coast of Trinidad, with an immature LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* (latest date for T&T) of undetermined age seen among 870 LAUGHING GULLS on 22 April, and a BLACK-HEADED GULL* (no details on plumage) reported on 26 April.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, the male CARIBBEAN MARTIN* (2nd for Trinidad) continues to be seen at Galera Point, where it was last reported on 23 April. A half-hour seabird watch the same day produced nothing more unusual than three SOOTY TERNS. In the afternoon of 23 April, 35 WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS and a GREAT BLUE HERON were seen south of Grande Riviere, but the resident Trinidad Piping-Guans eluded detection. On 24 April, a DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE and a lek of LITTLE HERMITS were found south of Sans Souci. Toward the southeast, a DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE, a STREAKED XENOPS, a lek of WHITE-BEARDED MANAKINS and two WHITE-SHOULDERED TANAGERS were reported along the Narangho Road west of Cumana on 23 April. Farther west, a presumably escaped SCARLET MACAW* was noted at Las Cuevas on 23 April.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the Trincity Sewage Ponds were surprisingly productive on 24 April, with two immature LITTLE EGRETS* (sporting dirty white lores and one possessing a partial crown plume), six BANK SWALLOWS (highest count for T&T) and 15 BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOWS (earliest date for T&T). In contrast, the Caroni Rice Fields produced nothing unusual on 22 April.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why do temperate birds lay larger clutches than tropical birds? Alexander Skutch (1949. Do tropical birds rear as many birds as they can nourish? *Ibis* 91:430-455) pointed out that the clutch sizes of tropical flycatcher species with uniparental care were essentially identical to those with biparental care, and argued that parent birds in the tropics did not work as hard as they could to rear their broods. Skutch proposed that the smaller clutches of tropical species served to reduce predation on nestlings. Because parents of small broods visit the nests less frequently than those of larger broods, they would be less likely to draw the attention of predators. However, subsequent studies suggested that predators usually do not find nestlings by observing the parents and that eggs are preyed upon about as frequently as nestlings. Furthermore, Skutch's hypothesis that mortality rates accounted for "adjusted reproduction" is more consistent with the theory of group selection, which is largely discredited by evolutionary biologists who believe that the individual, rather than the group, is the major target of natural selection.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-17

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-17) for 5 May 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Barbados, a presumably northbound TEREK SANDPIPER (1st for Barbados and West Indies) found at Congo Road on 1 May was well documented by an excellent series of photographs. Given the extreme rarity of this species in the region, it seems highly probable that it was the same individual observed at Waterloo, Trinidad, on 28 June 1999 (see SCBA 1999- 27). In the upcoming weeks birders should be alert for it as it migrates northward through the eastern Caribbean and eastern North America.

Judging from reports received during the last few years, April- June appear to be the most productive months for seabirding in the region. This week we received several reports from local birders who ventured out to sea. On 29 April, a pelagic trip off Barbados produced a surprising variety of seabirds. Most noteworthy was a dark-rumped storm-petrel, thought to possibly be a SWINHOE'S STORM-PETREL or dark-rumped race of the LEACH'S STORM-PETREL (no previous records of either from the Caribbean), plus 11 white-rumped storm-petrels, a few of which were definitely WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS. Other noteworthy birds included two AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS, three POMARINE JAEGERs, a PARASITIC JAEGER, 30 BRIDLED TERNS and a SOOTY TERN. In last week's alert we neglected to mention that the seven CATTLE EGRETS seen during the Caribbean cruise were all seen well out to sea and that a possible BULWER'S PETREL was seen off Barbados.

On 24 April, a birder traveling aboard an inter-island ferry between Trinidad and Tobago observed a RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD* (few records for Trinidad) and an unidentified JAEGER off the north coast of Trinidad.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a boat trip into the Gulf of Paria on 3 May produced a flock of ten PARASITIC JAEGERs* approximately 5 km south of Westmoorings, plus a GULL-BILLED TERN and several ROSEATE TERNS. A visit to Chacachacare Island on 3 May failed to produce any rarities. At Waterloo, recent sightings of LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* include an adult (uncertain which of the three previously reported individuals) on 1 May (latest date for T&T), a 2nd-year immature on 29 April, and an immature of unreported age on 26 April. On 29 April, a subadult jaeger thought to be a PARASITIC JAEGER* (though wing flashes resembled Long-winged Jaeger) was seen resting with about 630 LAUGHING GULLS on the mudflats of Waterloo. Also on 29 April, two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were seen in the vicinity of the new Visitor's Centre at Caroni Swamp.

In northeastern Trinidad, the male CARIBBEAN MARTIN (2nd for Trinidad) was seen again at Galera Point on 1 May.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a male WHITE-NECKED JACOBIN was noted in the Arena Forest on 22 April, providing further evidence for increased vagrancy to the lowlands during the dry season. At the Trincity Sewage Ponds, a RINGED KINGFISHER, two lingering BANK SWALLOWS* (tied latest date for T&T) and about 15 BLUE-AND- WHITE SWALLOWS were seen on 29 April. We received a late report of a breeding-plumaged adult LITTLE EGRET* seen independently from the two immature LITTLE EGRETS* reported in last week's alert on 24 April; thus, three different birds were present, though we have received no subsequent reports. Recent sightings from the Caroni Rice Fields include a COCOI HERON and a dark- phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER on 3 May, and a PEREGRINE FALCON, a dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER and several LIMPKINS on 22 April.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a pair of SWALLOW-TANAGERS was found nest-building in the hole of a bank along Las Lapas Trace on 4 May. At nearby Morne Bleu, a male and two female HEPATIC TANGERS and an immature male SWALLOW-TANAGER were seen the same day. Farther north along the Blanchisseuse Road, a mystery bird resembling a female Golden-headed Manakin but with a sharply defined yellowish throat and golden crown stripe was also noted the same day. At Caribbean Union College, single MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS were seen overhead on 1 May and 30 April. A cooperatively breeding TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD trio comprising a female and two unhealthy males constructed a new nest after their first of the year failed, but it was either abandoned by the mockingbirds or forcefully expropriated by GREAT KISKADEES who built their nest on top of the platform. This represents the third recorded incidence on the campus in which GREAT KISKADEES built their nest on top of a TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD nest. The trio is now nesting in their previous nest, representing the first instance of renesting in a failed nest and possibly reflecting the poor health of the two males.

In the lower Maracas Valley, a cat captured and killed an apparent hybrid PALM X BLUE-GRAY TANAGER (several previous reports, including photographs, from Trinidad) on 1 May. The bird resembled a Palm Tanager but light-blue feathers were uniformly sprinkled throughout the body, though the flight feathers of the wings and tail remained dark as in a Palm Tanager. Furthermore, the bird possessed a well-developed brood patch, indicating that it was a female in breeding condition. Genetic studies of the specimen should confirm whether it is a hybrid and studies of the chromosome structures and reproductive tract could potentially determine whether it is reproductively viable. Hybridization between this species is somewhat unusual because each has more closely related sister taxa on the South American continent.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: It's been a hectic week; check back next week.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-18

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-18) for 12 May 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a perplexing MYSTERY HERON baffled birders who carefully studied it from about 7:30-8:00 a.m. in a field beside pole 68 along the Cumuto-Arena Road, between Cumuto and Arena Forest, on 10 May. The bird was similar to a Cattle Egret, but clearly larger and stockier, with a heavier, mostly yellow bill; the shaggy feathers of the crest and neck were reddish-brown; the nape and back were brown and black, with long plumes extending to the rump; the wings, rump and underparts were mostly whitish; the tips of the primaries were blackish; and the legs and feet were greenish yellow. A colour drawing and a description provided by the observers and sent to various experts for comments produced a variety of suggestions, including Squacco Heron, Chinese Pond-Heron and Indian race of the Cattle Egret, but because the description doesn't quite fit others have suggested a leucistic Black-crowned Night-Heron or a hybrid between Black-crowned Night-Heron and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Although efforts to relocate the heron in the early afternoon of 10 May and early morning of 11 May were unsuccessful, birders should be alert for this extraordinary bird.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a pair of PLAIN ANTVIREOS was seen attending a nest at Morris Trace, about 15 metre inside Arena Forest, on 10 May. A COCOI HERON was seen at the Aripo Livestock Station on 28 and 30 April.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a SCALED ANTIPITTA* was heard calling near the 13 mile mark of the Blanchisseuse Road on 6 May. A census of the OILBIRD colony at Dunston's Cave on 8 May revealed 157 adults, 15 chicks and four eggs. An adult LAUGHING GULL was seen flying northward high over Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, on 7 May. The TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD nest with seven eggs at Caribbean Union College fledged two young. At Mt. St. Benedict, a BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTLA was reported from the Donkey Trail on 5 May and two RUFOUS NIGHTJARS have been calling at night.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a probable immature LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL*, possibly the 2nd-year immature, was seen in flight at Waterloo on 11 May (latest date for T&T). A 1st-year BLACK-HEADED GULL*, which was moulting into 1st-summer plumage, was also seen at Waterloo on 11 May. At the Port of Spain Sewage Ponds, which are too dangerous for birders to visit (there have been a few violent incidents involving birders), a courageous birder found a BLACK-NECKED STILT nest with two eggs on 9 May, but little else of interest. A spate of noteworthy sightings along the coast on 7 May include: two GREAT BLUE HERONS and two SANDWICH TERNS at Waterloo; an immature BROWN BOOBY flying off Orange Valley; a ZONE-TAILED HAWK and a male RED-CAPPED CARDINAL at the Pointe-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust; an estimated 60 SAFFRON FINCHES feeding on the lawns atop San Fernando Hill late in the evening; and two SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHERS heard and seen at Oropouche Lagoon, just south of San Fernando, where there had been only one previous report. On 5, 6 and 11 May, a COCOI HERON was seen in Caroni Swamp.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, three TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS were seen in the morning of 9 May and one was seen and another heard in the afternoon of 8 May at Grande Riviere. A LEAST TERN was noted along the beach of Grande Riviere on 8 May. An immature BRIDLED TERN was seen on a rock off Blanchisseuse on 8 May. Our last report of the male CARIBBEAN MARTIN* (2nd for Trinidad) at Galera Point is from 1 May.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, about 60 RED-BELLIED MACAWS were seen arriving at a roost at 4:30 p.m. in a clump of palms west of the T-junction of Kernahan Trace on 8 May. They have apparently abandoned the nearby traditional roost along the coast. A GREAT BLUE HERON was seen in Nariva Swamp on 8 May. On 30 April, a dying LEACH'S STORM-PETREL was seen on Manzanilla Beach.

On Tobago, a COMMON POTOO with a white nestling was seen along a trail at Grafton Estate on 2 May; another was seen at Roxborough on 4 May. On Little Tobago Island, just east of Tobago, a male SCARLET TANAGER* was seen by the dilapidated caretaker's house on 29 April and a BLACK VULTURE* was noted flying overhead on 25 April. On nearby St. Giles Island, MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS are AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS are actively breeding and the first BROWN NODDIES showed up on 25 April.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why do temperate birds lay larger clutches than tropical birds? M. L. Cody (1966. A general theory of clutch size. *Evolution* 20:174-184) suggested that the reproductive success of individuals could be increased if birds reduced clutch sizes, thereby saving energy that could be used to avoid predation and increase their competitive abilities. Cody predicted that clutch sizes would be smaller for birds in more climatically stable habitats such as the tropics, at lower elevations and on oceanic islands. However, clutch sizes of birds are no higher in the Central American highlands than in the lowlands. Because Cody's hypothesis suggests that clutch size is limited by the amount of energy devoted by adults toward reproduction, it can be considered a variation of Lack's hypothesis.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tsst.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-19

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-19) for 19 May 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Barbados, an ANTILLEAN NIGHTHAWK (1st for Barbados) was seen and its distinctive vocalisations heard as it flew eastward over Coles in the evening of 17 May. This is the first direct evidence to support the notion that this species may migrate (regularly?) through the Lesser Antilles. Almost without exception, migrant nighthawks seen in Barbados are silent, thus precluding identification. There are two specimen records of Antillean Nighthawk from the Netherlands Antilles during April and September, suggesting that they may even migrate to the South American continent.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, larids continue to turn up in surprising numbers and diversity. On 18 May, a 1st-summer LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* (latest date for T&T), a breeding-plumaged adult BLACK-HEADED GULL* and a POMARINE JAEGER* were seen roosting on the mudflats with the usual gulls, terns and skimmers. On 16 May, an adult and two immature (1st/2nd summer) LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* were seen at Orange Valley. At Waterloo on 16 May, an adult dark-morph PARASITIC JAEGER* harassed the terns for about 15 minutes and an hour later a POMARINE JAEGER* joined the gulls, terns and skimmers on the mudflats.

In northwestern Trinidad, an ill CRESTED OROPENDOLA was found sitting under a tree for several hours on 30 April and was nursed overnight, when it expired. A necropsy revealed it had an old injury to a wing and some serious subcutaneous bruising around its neck and breast. There was severe internal injury to the lungs. Most interesting was the presence of several filarial worms (resembling heart worm) wrapped around its intestines and in the abdominal cavity. The worms appeared identical to those found in an ill FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL killed by a GREAT KISKADEE about two years ago. The worms may have been vectored by a mosquito or other haemophitic insect (e.g., Reduvid). Gabriel Brown is seeking further information on other such incidences of filarial worm infections in birds and may be contacted by e-mail at ghbrown@tstt.net.tt.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two RINGED KINGFISHERS were seen at Caribbean Union College on 14 May. Two of 12 PALM TANAGERS recently captured on the campus possessed a few distinctly bluish feathers on the wings, suggesting the presence of BLUE-GRAY TANAGER alleles; testing of DNA samples should ultimately confirm whether they are indeed hybrids and whether hybridization occurs more frequently than previously suspected. Recent records from the Asa Wright Nature Centre reported in the centre's log of wildlife sightings include a SPECTACLED OWL on 11 May, a SHORT-TAILED PYGMY-TYRANT on 7 May, a male SCARLET TANAGER* on 24 April and a female SCARLET TANAGER* on 29 March.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a GLOSSY IBIS* was found in the Caroni Rice Fields on 16 May; other birds present included a BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK, 10 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 32 BLACK SKIMMERS. Waterbird numbers should be increasing as many plowed fields will soon be flooded and seeded. On 13 May, a MORICHE ORIOLE* was heard east of Cumuto and two RED-BELLIED MACAWS were noted at west of Cumuto. The MYSTERY HERON seen west of Cumuto on 10 May has not been relocated despite repeated attempts and its identity will likely remain a mystery.

In southwestern Trinidad, two GLOSSY IBISES* were noted in a rice field at Debe on 7 May.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why do temperate birds lay larger clutches than tropical birds? Several authors, including D. W. Snow (1978. The nest as a factor determining clutch-size in tropical birds. *J. Ornithol.* 119:227-230), have suggested that clutch size in some tropical species could be limited by selection favouring small nests that are inconspicuous to potential predators. However, other tropical species with small clutches nest on the ground or on substantial platforms. Minimum nest size is more likely limited by the size of the clutch rather than vice versa.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-20

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-20) for 26 May 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the Caroni Rice Fields have become productive once again as recently plowed fields are being flooded and seeded. On 24 May, a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER* (3rd spring record and latest spring date for T&T) was seen along with a LITTLE EGRET*, a PINNATED BITTERN, a light-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER, two RED KNOTS, 12 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS, a LEAST SANDPIPER, a SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER, about 50 BLACK-NECKED STILTS, 16 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 20 BLACK SKIMMERS.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two birds thought to be RINGED TURTLE-DOVES* (2nd for T&T, but obviously introduced) rather than Eurasian Collared-Doves have been consistently feeding at a residence in Valley View Drive, Maracas Valley, during the past several weeks. Several SWALLOW-TANAGERS were noted at Morne Bleu on 25 May. Two WHITE-WINGED BECARDS were seen in Tucker Valley on 23 May. A hike to the cloud forest atop Cerro del Aripo on 19 May produced several quail doves (presumably VIOLACEOUS QUAIL-DOVES), a singing ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH seen and several others heard, four BLUE-CAPPED TANAGERS and a SPECKLED TANAGER carrying twigs. In the hills above Bellevue Estate, St. Anne's, a variety of birds including TROPICAL PARULA, BLUE DACNIS, RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPER and WHITE-SHOULDERED TANAGER were noted on 24 May.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: The T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip along the North Coast Road to Blanchisseuse on Sunday, 11 June. If you wish to participate, please call Courtenay Rooks at 622-8826. We will meet in Port of Spain at Pembroke Street, between St. Mary's College and St. Joseph's Convent, at 6:30 a.m., or beside the road just north of "The Saddle" at 6:45 a.m.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why do temperate birds lay larger clutches than tropical birds? M. S. Foster (1974. A model to explain molt-breeding overlap and clutch size in some tropical birds. *Evolution* 28:182-190) pointed out that many tropical bird species moult while breeding. Thus, clutch size may be limited by the energy expended during moult. Foster suggested that moult and breeding overlap may be an adaptation to prolong the breeding period, thus allowing more renestings. Considering the low rates of breeding success in tropical birds, selection will favour small clutch sizes if accompanied by more potential renestings.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, gwhite@tstt.net.tt

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-21

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-21) for 2 June 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In northeastern Trinidad, the male CARIBBEAN MARTIN* (2nd for Trinidad) continues to linger with the resident flock of GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS at Galera Point, where it was last reported on 27 May. A one-hour seabird watch from Galera Point on 27 May produced no surprises, though 16 BROWN PELICANS, 15 MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS, 19 LAUGHING GULLS, 22 ROSEATE TERNS and two BROWN NODDIES were tallied.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a seamless plastic band 10 mm tall and 11 mm wide with an inside diameter of 8 mm was found inside an owl pellet (from a Barred, Spectacled or Mottled Owl) on the fire tower at Mt. St. Benedict on 20 May. The band contained the inscription "T&TPU 2000" and the number "0531"; we presume it belonged to a ROCK DOVE preyed upon by the owl, but would appreciate receiving further information from anybody knowledgeable about pigeon hobbyists in T&T. Recent bird records from the Asa Wright Nature Centre include a SPECTACLED OWL and two mating DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITES on 11 May, a COMMON POTOO calling on 9 May, and a SCALED ANTPITTA* heard on 7 May.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, impressive numbers of waterbirds continue to concentrate in the Caroni Rice Fields. Sightings on 29 May include the lingering BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER* (3rd spring record and latest spring date), a WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL, four LIMPKINS, 94 COLLARED PLOVERS, 88 BLACK-NECKED STILTS, 15 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 10 BLACK SKIMMERS. A PINNATED BITTERN nest with two eggs was found in the Caroni Rice Fields on 26 May. The last DICKCISSELS of the season were reported from the Aripo Livestock Station on 11 May (latest date for T&T).

Along the east coast of Trinidad, the carcass of a CORY'S SHEARWATER* was photographed on the beach at St. Anns Village, Mayaro, during the peak of high tide on 21 May. Dead or dying pelagic seabirds are often found stranded on the east coast beaches of Trinidad. We encourage birders to patrol the beaches more frequently and report their observations. Furthermore, specimens in reasonable condition should be collected, placed in a plastic bag and frozen for subsequent donation to scientists who may be able to determine their cause of death through a necropsy.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: The T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip along the North Coast Road to Blanchisseuse on Sunday, 11 June. If you wish to participate, please call Courtenay Rooks at 622-8826. We will meet in Port of Spain at Pembroke Street, between St. Mary's College and St. Joseph's Convent, at 6:30 a.m., or beside the road just north of "The Saddle" at 6:45 a.m.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Check back in a few weeks.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-22

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-22) for 8 June 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Along the west coast of Trinidad, rare species of larids continue lingering surprisingly late into the summer months. On 2 June, an adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* (latest date for T&T) with normal bill colouration and an adult POMARINE JAEGER* were noted among a few dozen LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo, while a 1st/2nd-year LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* with a two-toned bill was noted with a few dozen LAUGHING GULLS at Orange Valley. RED KNOTS are also lingering late, with four at Waterloo and two at Orange Valley on 2 June.

In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, surprising numbers of shorebirds turned up on 2 June; although the BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER could not be relocated (last reported 29 May), 15 STILT SANDPIPERS and four SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS were present. Other birds seen on 2 June included two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (single dark- and light-phased individuals), 52 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 46 BLACK SKIMMERS. Surprisingly no ducks were seen. Numbers of Fulvous Whistling-Duck, White-faced Whistling-Duck and White-cheeked Pintail may be expected to increase during the wet season.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a WHITE-THROATED SPADEBILL was seen at the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 3 June and a male SWALLOW TANAGER at Morne Bleu on 3 June.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: The T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip along the North Coast Road to Blanchisseuse on Sunday, 11 June. If you wish to participate, please call Courtenay Rooks at 622-8826. We will meet in Port of Spain at Pembroke Street, between St. Mary's College and St. Joseph's Convent, at 6:30 a.m., or beside the road just north of "The Saddle" at 6:45 a.m.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Check back next week.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-23

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-23) for 16 June 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Along the west coast of Trinidad, an adult POMARINE JAEGER* and two LESSER BLACK-BLACKED GULLS* (adult plus 2nd- year immature with two-toned bill) continue to linger on the mudflats of Waterloo, where they were last reported on 8 June (latest date for latter species for T&T). Also on 8 June, three COCOI HERONS were noted in Caroni Swamp.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the extensively flooded Caroni Rice Fields continue to attract hordes of waterbirds. The highlights on 15 June include: 54 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS (but surprisingly no other duck species), 22 LARGE-BILLED TERNS, four YELLOW-BILLED TERNS, 52 BLACK SKIMMERS, and many lingering Nearctic shorebird migrants including seven STILT SANDPIPERS and 17 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS. At Arena Forest, four WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS flew overhead and a COCOI HERON was noted in a small reservoir on 7 June. We neglected to mention earlier that the Pinnated Bittern nest reported in SCBA 2000- 21 represented the earliest breeding record for Trinidad.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, recent sightings include: seven SWALLOW-TAILED KITES along the Blanchisseuse Road in lower Arima Valley on 9 June; a group of four or five COLLARED TROGONS between Morne Bleu and Las Lapas on 9 June; a female SWALLOW TANAGER flying out of a mossy bank near Las Lapas on 9 June; a BAND-RUMPED SWIFT at Mt. St. Benedict on 7 June; and a female SWALLOW TANAGER at the balcony of the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 6 June.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, three PINNATED BITTERNs and an AZURE GALLINULE were seen at Kernaham on 5 June.

In southern Trinidad, a RED-AND-GREEN MACAW (presumably escaped), carefully distinguished from the Scarlet Macaw by an experienced observer, was seen between Morne Diablo and Quinam Beach Road on 8 June. The same observer reported recent sightings of presumably escaped RED-AND-GREEN MACAWS at Pointe-a-Pierre along the west coast and at Valsayn in northern Trinidad.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why do temperate birds lay larger clutches than tropical birds? B. G. Murray, Jr. (1985. Evolution of clutch size in tropical species of birds. Ornithological Monographs 36:505-519) developed the theory (first proposed by Moreau in 1944 but later ignored by others) that females maximise their lifetime reproduction by minimising reproductive effort during each breeding cycle. Tropical birds typically experience lower nesting success than temperate birds, which is compensated for by a longer breeding season and greater adult survivorship for tropical birds. The least effort would be achieved by producing clutches that will replacement themselves in the population. Thus, tropical birds increase their probability of producing additional clutches, either in the same season or in later breeding seasons, by producing smaller clutches.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, gwhite@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-24

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-24) for 23 June 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In southeastern Trinidad, two TRINIDAD PIPING- GUANS* were found on 6 June just south of Seismic Line 13 along Access Road CO-40, just off Saunders Road, in the Cats Hill Reserve. The birds were observed perched atop a Cecropia Tree at 6:45 in the morning. This sighting apparently represents the first from the critically endangered population of southern Trinidad since 1988. The observer noted many shotgun shells in the area, indicating heavy hunting pressure.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, four different LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* and an immature PARASITIC JAEGER* (thought to be the same individual first seen on 29 April) have been seen repeatedly this month at Waterloo, usually resting among the gulls, terns and skimmers on the mudflats. The PARASITIC JAEGER* is consistently present but only one or two LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* are seen at a time. Our most recent report is from 22 June, when both species were recorded (latest date for T&T for Lesser Black-backed Gull).

A foray into the Caroni Rice Fields of northern Trinidad on 22 June produced four different LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (one light-phased and three dark-phased), 48 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, an immature LAUGHING GULL (rare inland), 33 LARGE-BILLED TERNS, five YELLOW-BILLED TERNS, 62 BLACK SKIMMERS and 20 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS.

Elsewhere in northern Trinidad, a female PYGMY KINGFISHER and a MORICHE ORIOLE* were seen along Stephen Road, just off the Old Toco Road (where exactly is this?), in the northeast, on 22 June; a well- described GREAT BLACK-HAWK was reported at Maracas Bay, along the north coast, on 15 July; and two NEOTROPIC CORMORANTS were reported at Hollis Reservoir, in the Northern Range, on 12 June.

In Dominica, a one-hour hike at Emerald Pools on 14 June produced a female BLUE-HEADED HUMMINGBIRD, many LESSER ANTILLEAN SWIFTS, two BLACK SWIFTS, a LESSER ANTILLEAN PEWEE, a RUFOUS-THROATED SOLITAIRE (heard only), a TREMBLER (heard only), and a FOREST THRUSH plus others heard (apparently most reliable Dominican locality for this species).

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Do temperate species of mockingbirds have larger clutches than the Tropical Mockingbird? Researchers studying the Tropical Mockingbird at Caribbean Union College found substantial annual variation in clutch size, with a mean of 2.95 in 1997 (n=19), 2.71 in 1998 (n=14), 3.27 in 1999 (n=11) and 3.71 in 2000 (n=24 thus far). Overall clutch size for 68 nests is 3.22. Although the mode is 3 eggs, at least eight clutches during 1999-2000 ranged from 5-7 eggs. Furthermore, all clutches of 5-7 eggs occurred on territories defended by a cooperatively breeding trio including a male and two females; because both females shared incubation and provided for the young, and clutch size never exceeded 4 eggs in territories with only one female, clutches of 5-7 eggs were presumably laid by two females (and are expected to be verified by genetic tests of relatedness between parents and offspring). Assuming this to be the case, the adjusted clutch size per female would be 2.87. Stay tuned next for a comparison of clutch size among different species of mockingbirds.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-25

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-25) for 30 June 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 662-2002 x2047 (W) or 662-5918 (H), by fax at 662-9868, or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Rare larids continue to linger along the west coast of Trinidad at Waterloo. On 30 June, an adult and an immature (1st/2nd summer) LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* (latest date for T&T) and an immature PARASITIC JAEGER* were noted among 165 LAUGHING GULLS and a myriad of terns and BLACK SKIMMERS on the mudflats. Also present on 30 June were three RED KNOTS (latest date for T&T), of which one was in breeding plumage.

Elsewhere in Trinidad, recent sightings include: a SPOTTED SANDPIPER at Caroni Swamp on 28 June (earliest/latest date for T&T, but perhaps a summering individual); a subadult BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOW at Trincity on 27 June; an APLOMADO FALCON* and an AZURE GALLINULE at Nariva Swamp on 26 June; two LEAST BITTERNs at Trincity on 22 June; and CHESTNUT-COLLARED SWIFTS nesting at Dunston Cave, Arima Valley, on 14 June.

In Tobago, a breeding-plumaged LITTLE EGRET* was leisurely studied at Buccoo on 28 June. A GREAT BLUE HERON was noted in the pond along the Claude Noel Highway at Milford on 30 June. At Bloody Bay Village, two GRAY KINGBIRDS and two TROPICAL KINGBIRDS were noted mobbing a dead Cook's Tree Boa hanging from a bare wire on 30 June; the boa apparently had been electrocuted when it tried to descend into a Mango Tree just below the wire. Although SOUTHERN LAPWINGS have colonised most available grassy habitats on Tobago, including Speyside, two birds were noted foraging on the narrow sandy beach at Charlotteville, along the north tip of Tobago, on 29 June (there is only one record for Barbados). A GREAT BLACK-HAWK was seen above Speyside on 28 June. At Little Tobago, researchers have been banding adult and nestling AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS at their cavity nests along the trail above the beach.

On 29 June, a female BLUE-BACKED MANAKIN captured at Centre Hill, Tobago, possessed a distinctly red-tinged feather on the crown; the bird, which possessed a well developed brood patch, had been banded four years earlier and thus could not have been an immature male. A few months ago we received word of a BLUE-BACKED MANAKIN with some red crown feathers apparently incubating eggs in a nest along the Gilpin Trail. Only females are known to incubate in this and all other species of manakins. Although the androgynous acquisition of reddish feathering on the head of females seems unusual, it has been reported previously for this and several other species of manakins.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Do temperate species of mockingbirds have larger clutches than the Tropical Mockingbird? Previous studies of clutch size in the Northern Mockingbird of temperate North America reported mean clutches at the following localities arranged from north to south: 3.6 in Maryland/Pennsylvania; 3.8 in Illinois; 3.9 in Tennessee; 3.7 in Louisiana; and 3.5 in subtropical southern Florida. In Argentina, clutch size of the Chalk-browed Mockingbird was 3.0 in temperate Buenos Aires and 2.9 in subtropical Formosa. Clutch size is surprisingly high for mockingbirds in highly seasonal tropical localities. In southwestern Ecuador, clutch size of the Long-tailed Mockingbird averaged 3.9. Clutch size of the Galapagos Mockingbird in the Galapagos Islands also averaged 3.9. The mean clutch size of 2.9 for the Tropical Mockingbird in Trinidad is the lowest reported for any species of mockingbird.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-26

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-26) for 6 July 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Until further notice, reports should be sent to Graham White at (868) 673-0028 (W), 673-4585 (H), by fax at 673-0373, or by e-mail at g-white@tstt.net.tt. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: An immature or female SNAIL KITE* was carefully studied--though at a distance--in the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad on 1 and 4 July. The first WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS* of the year finally showed up on 1 July, when two were seen. Other birds recorded in the rice fields on 4 July included 66 BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS flying out of a single tree, two WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS*, 41 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, four WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS, two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (one pale, one dark), eight LIMPKINS, 26 STILT SANDPIPERS (apparently overwintering), 38 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS, 36 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 40 BLACK SKIMMERS. A few PINNATED BITTERNs and two YELLOW-BILLED TERNS were noted on 1 July. Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a female LESSER SEED-FINCH* with a brood patch and appearing to have eggs ready to lay was captured by a researcher in the Arena Forest on 2 July.

Two immature LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* (latest date for T&T) and the immature PARASITIC JAEGER* were seen at Waterloo, along the west coast of Trinidad, on 1 July. An adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* was also noted on 30 June.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, four TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS* were seen from a house along the Monte Video Road 1.0 km south of Grande Riviere on 2 July. The birds are reliably observed early in the morning (6:00-7:30) and are infrequently seen in the late afternoon. Visiting birders are expected to pay a fee of TT\$20 (US\$3) to the residents of the house. The residents report that they are seeing the birds daily. At nearby Galera Point, the highlights of a 40-minute seabird watch on 1 July included a BRIDLED TERN, about 15 COMMON/ROSEATE TERNS, 15 BROWN NODDIES and eight WILLETS. The male CARIBBEAN MARTIN* last reported from Galera Point on 27 May could not be relocated among a half dozen GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS on 1 July.

In Barbados, a GREATER SHEARWATER was found on a lawn at Chancery Lane, Christ Church, on 4 July. Five BLACK SWIFTS were seen at St. Bernard's Village, St. Joseph, on 2 July and two more were noted the following day at St. Thomas.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: W. A. Bonadie and P. R. Bacon recently studied the "Year-round utilisation of fragmented palm swamp forest by Red-bellied Macaws (*Ara manilata*) and Orange-winged Parrots (*Amazona amazonica*) in the Nariva Swamp (Trinidad)" (see *Biological Conservation* 95:1-5, 2000). Population estimates for the parrot and macaw were 136 and 224, respectively. The birds were observed feeding on seven species of plants, with palm fruits (*Mauritia setigera* and *Roystonea oleracea*) comprising 94% of the diet. Feeding on non-palm fruits was most prevalent when palm fruit availability was low during the late dry season. Nesting was observed only in *Mauritia* palms. The conservation of palms is vital in order to sustain the parrot and macaw populations of the swamp.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-27

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-27) for 14 July 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Until further notice, reports should be sent to Graham White at (868) 673-0028 (W), 673-4585 (H), by fax at 673-0373, or by e-mail at g-white@tstt.net.tt. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

APPEAL FROM TTRBC

Many rarities from Trinidad and Tobago that have been reported in this alert have not been reported to the Trinidad and Tobago Rare Bird Committee (TTRBC).

The primary functions of the TTRBC are

1. to ascertain which records of rare birds in Trinidad and Tobago are acceptable beyond reasonable doubt
2. to publish periodic reports on TTRBC decisions
3. to maintain an official list of the birds of Trinidad and Tobago.

The TTRBC cannot consider records that are not submitted- even if the observer has communicated his/her sightings to the Southern Caribbean Bird Alert (SCBA). Indeed the SCBA is a tool for communication and does not function as a means of reporting or verifying records.

The table below indicated all species reported in the SCBA which are on the TTRBC rare bird list, but for which we have received no official reports. I am urging recipients of the SCBA who have made these observations to fill out the report form ([MS Word file](#)) so that the records may be considered.

Forms may be submitted to the secretary Graham White at g-white@tstt.net.tt or 16 Waterloo Estate, Carapichaima. E-mail replies are preferred.

Date of SCBA	Species Reported
1999	
January	6 Summer tanager, Marbled godwit, little egret, Rufescent tiger-heron, white-tailed goldenthrout, bank swallow, black & white warbler
	17 Black hawk-eagle, Hook Billed kite
	24 Rufous-necked woodrail
	28 American Oystercatcher, golden-winged warbler, Laurence's warbler, gray heron, little egret, summer tanager, white-tailed tropicbird
February	5 White-eyed vireo, ring-necked duck, Eurasian whimbrel, black hawk-eagle, cliff swallow, bank swallow
	9 American coot (tgo), Caribbean coot (Tgo), little egret
	18 Herring gull
March	16 Hook-billed kite, blackpoll warbler
	24 King vulture
April	1 Cliff swallow, bank swallow
	8 6 little egrets, northern shoveler, lesser scaup, buff-breasted sandpiper, manx shearwater, lesser elaenia, black whiskered vireo,
	13 Cory's shearwater, manx shearwater, parasitic jaeger, black swift, chapman's swift, swainson's hawk,
	22 Caribbean martin, white-faced whistlingduck, green heron, bank swallow, king vulture
	28 Black-throated green warbler
May	6 Rufous shafted woodstar (mount)
	13 Azure gallinule, bank swallow
	19 Red-billed tropicbird
June	8 Ringed turtle dove
	23 Rufous-shafted woodstar AWNC
July	2 White-faced whistlingduck
	8 Hook-billed kite, Caribbean coot, little egret
August	10 Long-tailed jaeger, zone-tailed hawk (tgo)
	18 Ruddy-breasted seedeater, white-tailed goldenthrout
	25 Little egret, blue grounddove, yellow-bellied seedeater
September	10 Bank swallow
	15 Black hawk-eagle, little egret, aplomado falcon
	22 White-tailed tropicbird (tgo), black hawk-eagle
	30 Bank swallow, red-capped cardinal (nesting)
October	7 Ruff, aplomado falcon, pawi
	15 Bobolink, yellow-breasted seedeater
	21 Blackpoll warbler
November	3 Swainson's hawk
	11 Rufous-necked woodrail, lesser swallow-tailed swift (Tgo.)
	19 Glossy ibis, white ibis
	26 Summer tanager, blue-headed parrot (Tgo.) lesser seed finch, pawi
December	3 Baltimore oriole, blue-headed euphonia

	8	American oystercatcher, Rose-breasted grossbeak
	17	Purple heron (Tgo), white-tailed hawk, blue hooded euphonia
	24	Ruddy-breasted seedeater, moriche oriole, yellow-breasted seedeater
2000		
January	7	American Kestrel
	28	Scaled Antpitta, Hook-billed kite, Scarlet macaw, Spotted Rail, blue & yellow macaw, and in Tobago Caribbean coot and yellow-headed caracara
February	18	M. Godwit, little egret, bank swallow, ruddy-breasted seedeater, black-whiskered vireo, summer tanager, hook-billed kite.
	25	Blackpol warbler, yellow grossbeak
March	3	Grey heron. M. godwit
	17	Swallow tanager, black and white warbler
	24	Spotted tody-flycatcher (Claxton bay), Roadside hawk
April	7	Swainsons flycatcher
	14	Red-footed booby, Parasitic Jaeger, Caribbean Martin
	21	Scarlet tanager, rufous shafted woodstar (Morne bleu), M. Godwit, Bank swallow, Aplomado Falcon.
	28	Masked booby, little egret
May	5	Red-billed tropicbird, Parasitic Jaeger (10)
	12	Scaled antpitta, Scarlet Tanager (little tobago), Black Vulture (tobago).
	19	Scarlet tanager, glossy Ibis
	26	Buff-breasted sandpiper, little egret, ringed turtle dove
June	2	Caribbean martin, scaled antpitta, cory's shearwater, buff-breasted sandpiper
	23	Moriche oriole

BACK TO SCBA

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: The Caroni Rice Project Continues to be the place for ducks, with 14 **WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS***, 18 **FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS**, 8 **WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS**, and a **MALLARD***. Other birds include an **AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER** and a Summer plumaged **GLOSSY IBIS***, 36 **BLACK SKIMMERS**, 2 **LONG-WINGED HARRIERS** and 1 **PINNATED BITTERN**. The **SNAIL KITE** seen on the 1st and 4th of July was not seen again.

At Waterloo, along the west coast of Trinidad four large gulls were sighted. One was clearly an adult **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL*** of the race *graellsii* with a slate-grey back (latest date for T&T), this bird has been around for several weeks and is in very tatty plumage. Another adult bird was clearly larger and had a black back, it is either the nominant race of the **L-B-B Gull** or a **KELP GULL** neither of which have been recorded in Trinidad. The other two large gulls were immatures, both previously identified as **L-B-B Gulls** but one was of similar size to our "mystery" Gull.

The **PARASITIC JAEGER*** recorded at Waterloo, is still seen almost daily. This is another difficult bird to identify having been independantly identified by three observers as three different species! All resident birders are encouraged to visit the site and add to the observetions. Other species at waterloo include 4 **GREAT BLUE HERONS**.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: W. A. Bonadie and P. R. Bacon recently studied the "Year-round utilisation of fragmented palm swamp forest by Red- bellied Macaws (*Ara manilata*) and Orange-winged Parrots (*Amazona amazonica*) in the Nariva Swamp (Trinidad)" (see *Biological Conservation* 95:1-5, 2000). Population estimates for the parrot and macaw were 136 and 224, respectively. The birds were observed feeding on seven species of plants, with palm fruits (*Mauritia setigera* and *Roystonea oleracea*) comprising 94% of the diet. Feeding on non-palm fruits was most prevalent when palm fruit availability was low during the late dry season. Nesting was observed only in *Mauritia* palms. The conservation of palms is vital in order to sustain the parrot and macaw populations of the swamp.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-28

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-28) for 21 July 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Until further notice, reports should be sent to Graham White at (868) 673-0028 (W), 673-4585 (H), by fax at 673-0373, or by e-mail at g-white@tstt.net.tt. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The [T&T Rare Bird Committee](#) requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: This week has been very poor in terms of sightings sent in. At the Caroni Rice Project nothing rare- but the numbers of waders are increasing. One observer presented the following list: at least 470 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 12 GREATER YELLOWLEGS, 3 STILT SANDPIPERS, 25 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS, 37 LEAST SANDPIPERS, 2 SOLITARY SANDPIPERS (19 July is earliest date for SOLITARY SANDPIPER). The GLOSSY IBIS* seen previously was still present. A short trip on 15th yielded 8 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS and 2 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL.

At Waterloo, along the west coast of Trinidad, ON 15 & 16 July the adult and a 3rd-summer gull-like LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* was again sighted, but the mystery gull (adult Kelp/fuscus LBBG) was not sighted. The PARASITIC JAEGER* which has been seen for several weeks was still present. Despite the excitement about the gulls the terns have been the most abundant seabirds for many weeks. This week at Waterloo there were 72 COMMON TERNS, 73 YELLOW-BILLED TERNS, 57 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 3 GULL-BILLED TERNS in breeding plumage. There are also 2 LONG-WINGED HARRIERS patrolling the area.

Along the east coast of Trinidad on 14th an AZURE GALLINULE and a RINGED KINGFISHER was sighted just west of the community center at the Melon Patch. 15 PLUMBEOUS KITES were seen between Manzanilla Village and the Valencia Stretch.

We have a few late reports: an APLOMADO FALCON* seen on 5 July at the Melon Patch. In Tobago on 6 July one or possibly 2 WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRDS* were seen on Little Tobago, and on 11 July a male WHITE-NECKED JACOBIN on a flowering tree on Flagstaff Hill, Charlotteville.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Check back next week.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-29

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-29) for 4 August 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Grenada, two GRENADA DOVES were seen at Mt. Hartman on 26 July and several others were heard in the Mt. Hartman area from 26-31 July. Finding this endemic dove, whose population apparently numbers less than 100, normally requires considerable effort and patience--plus a four-wheel-drive vehicle to safely get in and out of the best site to find it.

To search for the Grenada Dove, proceed eastward from the Point Salines International Airport to the second roundabout and turn right. Proceed 0.6 km (0.35 mi) to where the paved road begins to turn left and turn right onto a dirt road. The dirt road forks immediately, with a large sign welcoming you to the "Mt. Hartman Dove Sanctuary." Take the left fork and follow it 1.7 km (1.0 mi) to where the road forks again. On the way to this point you will pass a pig farm on the left and a mangrove lagoon on the right. The doves can be found in the dry forests on the hills to the left of the road, but are more easily searched for after turning left at the fork and proceeding up a narrow valley where the forest is more accessible on both sides of the road. Stop and listen for a single, descending "hooooo," repeated at roughly 8 sec intervals.

Choose the bird calling closest to the forest edge and slowly approach it, gradually working your way through the thorn scrub forest, and sit nearby where--if lucky--you will see it as it walks through the undergrowth. A distinctive whistling of the wings can be heard when the bird flies. Usually a few birds call during the first few hours of the morning; some birds call in the late afternoon as well, but are less likely to be walking around.

Elsewhere in Grenada, wintering FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS have invaded the southwestern peninsula, where they were noted at several localities from 26-31 July; the high count was ten at True Blue on 26 July. At Lake Antoine, two male and three female RUDDY DUCKS were noted among dozens of PIED-BILLED GREBES and CARIBBEAN COOTS on 27 and 30 July. Sightings of WILSON'S PLOVER, all of the South American race *cinnamominus*, included seven at Mt. Hartman on 26 July, six at True Blue on 30 July, and up to two females at the Rex Grenadian Hotel from 30 July to 1 August. At the latter site, one female was incubating two eggs on a small island at the hotel's pond; curiously no male was seen during three visits.

In Barbados, an immature GREY HERON and an immature GREAT BLUE HERON were noted at Graeme Hall Swamp on 19 July; the GREY HERON was noted again on 23 July. LITTLE EGRETS are currently nesting at Graeme Hall Swamp, with 2-3 eggs examined at six nests (no incubating adult was seen at a presumed seventh nest) on 23 July; by 1 August, 3-4 eggs were present in each nest except one with three nestlings. Ten MASKED DUCKS were seen at a pond in south-central Barbados on 23 July.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an adult and two second-summer LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* continue to linger; the three were last reported from Orange Valley on 2 August. The black-backed MYSTERY GULL, thought to represent either the *fuscus* or *intermedius* race of the Lesser Black-backed Gull or possibly a Kelp Gull, was first noted at Waterloo on 8 July and seen several times during the subsequent weeks. Although we don't have a firm date for the last sighting, excellent photographs were reportedly obtained and will be scrutinized shortly; hopefully we will provide further details next week. Presumably the bird is still wandering about the area, but it is decidedly more elusive than the other big gulls with which it occasionally associates. Fewer than 100 LAUGHING GULLS are currently present in the area. Other noteworthy birds seen included three RED KNOTS at Orange Valley on 2 August.

In the Caroni Rice Fields, the adult GLOSSY IBIS*, first found on 12 July, was seen as recently as 4 August. Two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS were noted on 4 August and two FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 2 August; a single dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER was noted on both days. A few previously mentioned birds merit further comment. The 17 WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS* noted on 25 July provided the highest recent count for T&T. The male MALLARD* present on 8 July was undoubtedly an escaped bird. The AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER seen during 12-25 July represented the 2nd summer record for T&T (one was noted on 26 June last year). Nine PECTORAL SANDPIPERS and a WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER on 25 July provided the earliest dates for T&T.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, an exhausted but alive seabird, thought to be a CORY'S SHEARWATER*, was photographed at St. Ann's Village, Mayaro, on 22 July (latest date for T&T if identity can be confirmed).

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a RINGED KINGFISHER flew through Maracas Valley on 3 August. On 2 August, a mixture of swifts moving through Mt. St. Benedict ahead of a mid-morning rain storm included at least eight WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS, two CHESTNUT-COLLARED SWIFTS, two-four LESSER SWALLOW-TAILED SWIFTS and larger numbers of SHORT-TAILED SWIFTS and FORK-TAILED PALM-SWIFTS. Up to five SWALLOW-TANAGERS were noted from the balcony of the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 30 July.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Why should birders take field notes? Professional and amateur scientists routinely take notes on their observations and experiments. Because the documentation of natural history information is important, birders should learn to take good field notes. Note keeping may enhance the skills of birders by forcing you to more carefully scrutinize a bird, helping you identify an unfamiliar bird, serving as a reference for your observations, and providing scientists with valuable information. Note keeping should begin by recording the date and location at the top of a page, preferably in a small, hardbound notebook that should always be carried in the field (or at least in your vehicle). Notes may include data on the species observed, number of individuals for each species, plumages, behaviours, natural history observations (e.g., nests, habitat, etc.) and descriptions of rare or unusual birds.

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Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-30

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-30) for 11 August 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Photographs of the black-backed MYSTERY GULL at Waterloo, Trinidad, during 8-10 July, are now circulating among experts in gull identification. Thus far we have received six responses and are pleased with an emerging consensus on the gull's identity, but to give more time for others to respond we will defer publicizing the verdict until next week (sorry if you're disappointed). Although subsequent attempts to find the mystery gull have been unsuccessful, it may still be wandering about the west coast of Trinidad. An adult and 2nd-summer immature LESSER BLACK- BACKED GULL* were noted at Waterloo on 5 August. Other noteworthy birds included a BARN SWALLOW (earliest date for T&T), four GREAT BLUE HERONS and three GULL-BILLED TERNS.

Migratory shorebirds populations continue to build up in the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, with 18 species recorded within the past month. A census on 8 August produced 650 LEAST SANDPIPERS, 400 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 150 STILT SANDPIPERS, 65 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 18 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS, seven SOLITARY SANDPIPERS, six SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, six SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS, only five GREATER YELLOWLEGS and three RED KNOTS. Other birds included a LEAST GREBE, a PINNATED BITTERN, nine FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, two WHITE-FACED WHISTLING- DUCKS*, and two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (dark- and light-phased). Highlights on 5 August included: two BARN SWALLOWS (earliest date for T&T, seen before the Waterloo bird mentioned above); two PINNATED BITTERNS (heard calling), three FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, four WHITE- FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS* and a dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER. Birders exploring the rice fields after dark on 5 August encountered two NACUNDA NIGHTHAWKS and two BARN OWLS.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Birders who observe rare birds should document their sightings by photographs, if possible. Rare birds may also be documented by collecting for preparation as museum specimens or by tape recording their vocalizations, but this is rarely accomplished. In the absence of physical documentation, a thorough written description--taken in the field, not from a field guide--will often suffice to convince the experts. As detailed a description as possible should be written while observing the bird or as soon as possible afterward, and always before consulting a field guide. Stay tuned next week for suggestions on describing rarities.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The [T&T Rare Bird Committee](#), formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-31

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-31) for 15 August 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

MYSTERY SOLVED: The consensus among 11 gull aficionados who commented on the photographs of the "mystery gull" (Waterloo, Trinidad, 8-10 July) was that the combination of black mantle, intermediate body size, heavy bill and yellowish legs effectively eliminated the Lesser Black-backed and Great Black-backed Gulls as potential candidates, and was most consistent with KELP GULL*. This is the first record of this Southern Hemisphere species for T&T and for the entire Caribbean/northeastern South America region.

In South America, Kelp Gull has not been reported north of Ecuador on the Pacific coast or 10°S in Brazil on the Atlantic coast. In the Northern Hemisphere it was first recorded on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico in 1987. Since then it has appeared elsewhere in Mexico (Tamaulipas) and the USA (Louisiana, Texas, Indiana and Maryland). Since 1990, a few Kelp Gulls have bred regularly on the Chandeleur Islands, Louisiana, where they have been hybridising with Herring Gulls; they appear only during the breeding season and afterward disperse, possibly to Texas and Mexico where they have been recorded during winter.

The pale iris coloration of the Trinidad bird indicates it belongs to the nominate race occurring in the New World (a dark-eyed race occurs in southern Africa). The worn primary tips and brightly coloured soft parts (legs especially) suggest that it is an alternate (breeding) plumaged bird that has been in the Northern Hemisphere for some time rather than a recent vagrant from the Southern Hemisphere. Although the origin of the North American Kelp Gulls has been questioned, natural vagrancy may be more frequent than currently recognised. Resident and visiting birders within the region should be on the lookout for this species, even in nesting colonies of Laughing Gulls and terns where it may attempt to breed (as ludicrous as this may seem, nobody ever imagined it would colonise islands in the subtropical Gulf of Mexico where only Laughing Gulls and terns had nested previously).

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: The wet season is the best time of year for finding South American waterbird vagrants in Trinidad and the Caroni Rice Fields are the hottest spot to search for them. This year is proving to be an exceptional year for such vagrants (recent reports included Glossy Ibis and Snail Kite). On 13 August, 13 (this time a lucky number) immature or female COMB DUCKS* (4th for T&T and highest count) and 22 WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS (highest count for T&T) were found in the rice fields. Subsequent reports of COMB DUCK* include 21 on 14 August and 16 on 15 August. Other birds seen on 13 August included a LITTLE EGRET*, two PINNATED BITTERNS, 21 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, four BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (one dark, one light) and a WHITE-TAILED GOLDENTHROAT. Although thousands of migratory Nearctic shorebirds are passing through, no rarities could be found. The Comb Ducks were found along the dirt road 0.5 km east of the gate beside the Caroni Swamp Bird Sanctuary flyover (crossing the Uriah Butler Highway). They feed in the marshes south of the road, where they may be difficult to see, but often fly about in small groups.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 3 September, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the Caroni Rice Fields and the coastal mudflats of Waterloo and Orange Valley, Trinidad, in search of waterbirds. The leader will be Floyd Hayes. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826) or Floyd Hayes (tel. 662-5918). We will be meeting by the South Entrance of the University of the West Indies at 7:00 a.m.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: A field notebook should be used to describe any unfamiliar or potentially rare bird. A good description should begin with the size and shape of the bird, and proceed to the colors or patterns of its soft parts (bill, eyes, legs), upperparts and underparts, preferably from the head to the tail. A crude drawing with color or pattern labels is recommended. Information regarding viewing conditions should also be noted, including the date and time of the observation, the weather and light conditions, the distance from birds and optical aids used, other species present for comparison, and other observers present. Descriptions should be written as candidly and honestly as possible. After writing the description, discrepancies between what was observed and what appears in a field guide (birds often vary somewhat from illustrations) could be added to the description.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The [T&T Rare Bird Committee](#), formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Over 130 records have been submitted thus far. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-32

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-32) for 23 August 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Trinidad, COMB DUCKS* (4th for T&T) continue to lurk in the western end of the Caroni Rice Fields, but are often elusive and usually seen only in flight. All appear to be females and immatures; several noticeably larger than the others are presumably immature males. Recent sightings include seven on 22 August, three on 20 August, ten on 19 August, none on 18 August and 17 on 15 August. On 22 August, the following birds were tallied in the rice fields: an adult AZURE GALLINULE (2nd outside of Nariva Swamp), 23 WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS* (highest count for T&T), five BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, ten FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, 11 LIMPKINS, 430 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 90 STILT SANDPIPERS, 71 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS, 33 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS, 17 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS and 17 RED KNOTS. Highlights on 19 August included: four LITTLE EGRETS* (three with pale grey ceres, one with bluish ceres), two PINNATED BITTERNs, 19 WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS*, a WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL and 11 RED KNOTS. Highlights on 15 August included a LEAST GREBE, a LITTLE EGRET* and 19 WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS*. Currently the ducks are most numerous in the northwestern sector, egrets in the eastern sector and shorebirds in the eastern and southwestern sectors.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, Orange Valley produced a LITTLE EGRET* (with pale grey ceres) plus two LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* (adult and second-summer immature) on 20 August. At Waterloo, 12 BLACK-NECKED STILTS and six GULL-BILLED TERNS were noted on 20 August. Numbers of LAUGHING GULL appear to be increasing, with 212 at Waterloo (including the first juveniles of the season) and 150 at Orange Valley on 20 August.

In the Bocas Islands, located between Trinidad and Venezuela, birders were baffled by an odd-looking finch subsequently identified as a YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY* (1st for T&T), found singing in trees near the lighthouse of Chacachacare on 16 August. This African species is widely kept in captivity and a small feral population has been established in Puerto Rico (see illustration in West Indies guide). Presumably the bird escaped from captivity in Trinidad rather than the sparsely inhabited adjacent areas of Venezuela (natural vagrancy from Africa is highly improbable), though the possibility of one escaping from a visiting human on the island cannot be ruled out. Single BARN SWALLOWS (1st for Bocas Islands) were noted both on Nelson and Chacachacare Islands on 16 August. Other birds found on Chacachacare on 16 August included a WHITE HAWK, two SHORT-TAILED HAWKS (one dark, one pale), about 25 FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS and about 20 YELLOW-BELLIED SEEDEATERS (dispersed and singing). Other noteworthy observations from Nelson Island on 16 August include a BLACK VULTURE nest with two eggs and a SHORT-TAILED SWIFT incubating in a nest within an abandoned concrete water storage tank.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a hike up Mt. St. Benedict on 19 August produced a two COLLARED TROGONS, a GRAY-THROATED LEAFLOSSER, a GREAT ANTSHRIKE, a BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTILA, a male RED-CROWNED ANT-TANAGER and three pairs of RUFIOUS-BREASTED WRENS feeding young.

In Grenada, ornithologists studied a pair of HOOK-BILLED KITES feeding a nestling in a nest about 12 m high in a Silk Cotton Tree at Grand View Inn, Morne Rouge, during 5-11 August. The kites were observed feeding almost exclusively on three species of arboreal snails; previous work had established that two species were preyed upon. When about 3 weeks old, the nestling consumed about 30 snails a day. Hook-billed Kites are difficult to find at this time of the year because most are either incubating or feeding actively in dense bush, usually near the nest. One was seen near Ocean View Bar (near Fort Frederick), a pair plus a juvenile were found behind the supermarket at Petit Bouc, and a pair was noted at an elevation of about 365 metres at Mount Parnassus. A February survey of this critically endangered endemic subspecies produced 14-16 different individuals, mostly in the southwestern part of the island.

Elsewhere on Grenada, five RUDDY DUCKS continue to be seen among PIED-BILLED GREBES and CARIBBEAN COOTS at Lake Antoine, where they were last reported on 6 August. Also on 6 August a few CARIBBEAN COOTS were noted at Levera Pond. Up to five FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS continue to be seen daily in the vicinity of the airport. A BLACK SWIFT was noted at Ocean View on 9 October and a family of BARN OWLS was seen nightly at Grand View.

In Barbados, three nestling LITTLE EGRETS were colour-banded at their rookery in Graeme Hall Swamp on 13 August; several more nestlings will be banded as they grow larger. One nestling regurgitated a small shrimp; only small fish had been noted in previous regurgitations. The only shorebirds present at Graeme Hall included two LESSER YELLOWLEGS, two SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS and a few SPOTTED SANDPIPERS. Two ROYAL TERNS seen on 13 August, one at Oistins and the other near Flour Mill, were unusual summer visitors.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 3 September, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the Caroni Rice Fields and the coastal mudflats of Waterloo and Orange Valley, Trinidad, in search of waterbirds. The leader will be Floyd Hayes. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826) or Floyd Hayes (tel. 662-5918). We will be meeting by the South Entrance of the University of the West Indies at 7:00 a.m.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Because birds are relatively numerous and easily observed, their populations provide an excellent gauge of environmental changes. Census data may be useful for several types of comparisons of bird abundance, such as variation among different species, periods of the day, seasons, years, habitats and regions. Unfortunately few studies of bird populations have been published in the southeastern Caribbean. However, a variety of methods have been developed for censusing birds, which will be discussed in the next series of alerts.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The [T&T Rare Bird Committee](#), formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Thus far 195 records have been submitted. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-33

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-33) for 29 August 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Trinidad, the Caroni Rice Fields were sizzling hot over the weekend. The highlight was an adult male RUFF* (5th for Trinidad and 1st in nearly 10 years), with bright orange legs and base to the bill, seen by many birders during 25-27 August in the eastern sector. To search for it, proceed southward on the Southern Main Road from its junction with the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway (with Pizza Hut, KFC and Kay Donna Drive-In) 2.4 km to a large, steel bridge; after crossing the bridge, turn left at the T- intersection and continue 2.0 km, turning right onto a dirt road just after the police station. Follow this road 1.0 km and turn left onto another dirt road; after 0.2 km you will reach the first of two muddy fields on the right, where the Ruff was seen repeatedly, though it also frequented the adjacent marshes where it is more difficult to find. The adult GLOSSY IBIS* reappeared over the weekend, lurking in the adjacent marshes during 25-27 August. On 26 August, an APLOMADO FALCON*, BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (20th shorebird species of the season) and RINGED KINGFISHER were also seen in the area. Meanwhile, large numbers of ducks continue to linger in the sedge marshes at the western end of the Caroni Rice Fields, just east of the Caroni Swamp Bird Sanctuary flyover, with three COMB DUCKS*, 20 WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS* and five BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS reported as recently as 26 August. The high count of RED KNOTS climbed to 32 on 25 August and two GULL-BILLED TERNS were noted on 24 August.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, two possible but distant RUFIOUS CRAB-HAWKS* were reported at Carli Bay on 27 August. At Waterloo, highlights on 27 August included an adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* (among 250 LAUGHING GULLS), three GREAT BLUE HERONS, seven GULL-BILLED TERNS and 14 BLACK-NECKED STILTS.

Elsewhere in Trinidad, a HOOK-BILLED KITE* was seen along Todd's Road in central Trinidad on 25 August, and a male LONG-BILLED STARHROAT was reported at Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, on 28 August.

With regard to the YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY* reported from Chacachacare on 16 August, a correspondent has informed us that the feral population on Puerto Rico appears to have been extirpated, with no reliable sightings in the past 5 years. Puerto Rico's feral population of RED SISKIN also appears to be on the brink of extirpation, presumably due to the flourishing but illegal cagebird industry.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On Sunday, 3 September, the T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the Caroni Rice Fields and the coastal mudflats of Waterloo, Orange Valley and Carli Bay, Trinidad, in search of waterbirds. Given the spate of rarities turning up at these localities during the past few weeks, the trip should be productive. The leader will be Floyd Hayes. If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks (tel. 622-8826) or Floyd Hayes (tel. 662-5918). We will be meeting by the South Entrance of the University of the West Indies at 6:30 a.m. (note the earlier time than listed in previous alerts).

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Ranking birds into various relative abundance categories is the simplest method for quantifying bird abundance, and requires nothing more sophisticated than actively birding a given area. Each species may be ranked according to the number of detections (either seen or heard, the latter obviously requiring knowledge of a bird's vocalizations) during a given period of time within a given region. In the case of migrant birds, rankings should be based on peak abundance during the appropriate season. Such rankings are ubiquitous in checklists, field guides and bird finding guides. However, biologically meaningful definitions for relative abundance categories are often not stated. The following set of definitions is but one example of how relative abundance may be ranked: abundant, 10 or more recorded daily in appropriate habitat; common, usually recorded daily in appropriate habitat; uncommon, recorded every 2-10 days in appropriate habitat; occasional, recorded at intervals of 11-30 days; rare, recorded 1-10 times during a year; casual, recorded 1-10 times per decade; and accidental, recorded 1-10 times per century.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The [T&T Rare Bird Committee](#), formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Thus far 195 records have been submitted. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tsst.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-34

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-34) for 5 September 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: The T&TFNC's birding trip to the Caroni Rice Fields and west coast of Trinidad on 3 September attracted 17 participants and produced 22 species of shorebirds among many other birds.

The Caroni Rice Fields continue to be the most productive hotspot in Trinidad. Highlights from the T&TFNC trip to the Caroni Rice Fields on 3 September included: two dark-cered LITTLE EGRETS* among roughly 300 SNOWY EGRETS, a dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER, two WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS*, seven BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, six FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, 25 RED KNOTS (including three with coloured leg flags) and three GULL-BILLED TERNS. An APLOMADO FALCON* was noted on 1 September. Our last reports of COMB DUCKS* were of five on 31 August and three on 30 August. A LEAST GREBE was noted on 31 August and two adults, one of which was carrying a chick on its back, were seen on 26 August. Ten WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS* and a mating pair of LIMPKINS were reported on 30 August. A HUDSONIAN GODWIT on 29 August provided the earliest date for T&T. Our last reports of the RUFF* and GLOSSY IBIS* were on 27 August.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, highlights from the T&TFNC field trip on 3 September included: three LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* (1st- summer and 2nd-summer immatures plus an adult) among 170 LAUGHING GULLS, an intergrade SANDWICH TERN ('Cayenne' > 'Sandwich', with a dark base to the bill), six GULL-BILLED TERNS, two WILSON'S PLOVERS, four RED KNOTS, eight BLACK-NECKED STILTS and the first YELLOW WARBLER of the season (earliest date for T&T). Less expected were a dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER and a ZONE-TAILED HAWK circling over the coastal mudflats. At Orange Valley, 99 SOUTHERN LAPWINGS provided the largest concentration yet recorded in T&T. A possible CRAB HAWK* (few previous reports for Trinidad) was seen again at Carli Bay on 2 September, but could not be relocated the following day.

In the Central Range of Trinidad, an adult BLACK HAWK-EAGLE* was well observed and heard as it circled over Tortuga on 3 September.

In Tobago, the following birds were recently observed during 20-27 August in the Bon Accord Sewage Ponds: nine BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING- DUCKS, four WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS, three ANHINGAS and a GREAT BLUE HERON.

Recent sightings from Barbados include: a flock of eight BLACK SWIFTS (equaling previous high count) near Bayfield, St. Philip, on 3 September (presumably included one seen a half-hour earlier at East Point, St. Philip); the 1st CLIFF SWALLOW of the season among a dozen BARN SWALLOWS near Bayfield, St. Philip, on 3 September; and an UPLAND SANDPIPER flying over Bailey Hill, St. Thomas, on 25 August.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Spot mapping (or territory mapping) is often an effective method of censusing birds, particularly for species which defend a territory. It is usually limited to the breeding season. This method consists of plotting the locations of each bird sighted on a gridded map during numerous visits to a plot. At the culmination of the surveys, the sightings usually form clusters, each of which may be interpreted as a territory occupied by two birds. Thus, density may be calculated as twice the number of clusters divided by area.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Thus far 195 records have been submitted. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-35

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-35) for 12 September 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the SCALED ANTPITTA* continues to be heard calling from a steep slope on the east side of the Blanchisseuse Road between Las Lapas and Brasso Seco Junction; our last report is from 7 September, when it was heard at 7:00 am. Other noteworthy birds reported on 7 September include: a SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWK, two presumed RUDDY QUAIL-DOVES (heard only), a flock of about 20 CHESTNUT-COLLARED SWIFTS and a male HEPATIC TANAGER at Morne Bleu; a COLLARED TROGON, a flock of about 15 WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS and five RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPERS at Las Lapas; two HEPATIC TANAGERS near Brasso Seco Junction; and a singing GRAY- THROATED LEAFTOSSER south of Morne Bleu.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the immature SNAIL KITE* was relocated in the Caroni Rice Fields on 7 September and found again on 9 September, both times to the NW of the flat steel bridge near the southwestern entrance. It is best found by scanning the bushes--upon which it often perches for long periods--along the western edges of the rice fields. Newly arriving Nearctic migrants included 12 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS on 7 September (increasing to 21 on 9 September), a female BLUE-WINGED TEAL on 9 September and two BANK SWALLOWS* on 9 September. Up to four GULL-BILLED TERNS and five COMMON WAXBILLS* (including three seen for the first time in the central part of the rice fields) were noted on 7 September. Whistling-Duck numbers seem to have plummeted, with only two FULVOUS and one BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS seen on 7 September, but three WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS were seen. The COMB DUCKS* last reported on 31 August have apparently disappeared.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, noteworthy records on 7 September include: a LITTLE EGRET* and two COMMON WAXBILLS* at the Trincity Sewage Ponds; a dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER, a LITTLE CUCKOO and a LONG-BILLED STARHROAT at the Aripo Livestock Station; and a BAT FALCON, three SULPHURY FLYCATCHERS and 15 RED-BELLIED MACAWS at Aripo Savannas.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, a RUFOUS CRAB-HAWK* (few previous records for T&T) was reported from Nariva Swamp on 6 September. Efforts to relocate it on 10 September were unsuccessful, but a WILSON'S PLOVER and about 30 LEAST TERNS were noted at the mouth of the Nariva River.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, recent sightings at Waterloo include: two TRINIDAD EUPHONIAS on 9 September, and a MARBLED GODWIT* (earliest date for T&T) and a WILSON'S PLOVER on 7 September. At the International School near the Diego Martin River, a pair of SOUTHERN LAPWINGS was incubating three eggs up until 11 September.

In Tobago, a WHITE-WINGED SWALLOW* (1st for Tobago) and a WHITE- TAILED TROPICBIRD* (4th for T&T) were observed at Little Tobago on 6 September.

In Barbados, a flooded field at Norwoods on 10 September attracted over 400 shorebirds of 14 species, including 80 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS, 34 SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS, 13 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS and three WESTERN SANDPIPERS. Newly arriving Nearctic migrants included a COMMON TERN at Bridgetown on 10 September and a BANK SWALLOW in northern Barbados on 9 September. On 3 September, eight adult CARIBBEAN COOTS, together with six juveniles and three chicks, were seen at East Point, St. Philip. The species first started to breed there last year with one pair, but obviously more pairs are now breeding.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: On 7 September, three resident birders tallied 167 species of birds (162 seen by all; total includes naturalised Rock Dove and Common Waxbill) in Trinidad, breaking the 23-year-old "Big Day" record of 156 species set on 25 May 1977. Their itinerary, which began at 4:00 am and ended at 7:30 pm, included the following locations: Arima Valley (before dawn), Morne Bleu, Brasso Seco Junction, Las Lapas, Asa Wright Nature Centre, Simla, Aripo Livestock Station, Trincity Sewage Ponds, Caroni Rice Fields, Waterloo, Caroni Swamp, Aripo Savannas, and Wallerfield (after sunset). Highlights (see above) included Little Egret, Snail Kite, Marbled Godwit, Short-tailed Nighthawk, Little Cuckoo and Scaled Antpitta. Biggest misses included White Hawk, Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Tropical Parula, Bicolored Conebill, Tricolored Heron and Common Pauraque. Intermittent rainfall slowed progress in the morning. The observers believe that 180 is feasible with better time management and fair weather.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Birds may be censused by capturing them with mist nets. Mist nets comprise several shelves of fine nylon mesh, usually black in color, which are suspended between two poles. Because they are difficult to see, especially in the shade, birds simply fly into them and become entangled. Mist netting may be used to estimate abundance by calculating the number of birds captured per net hour, based on nets that are 12 meters long; if nets other than 12 meters long are used, capture rates are simply extrapolated to the 12-meter standard (e.g., an hour with a 6-meter net equals half a net hour).

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Thus far 195 records have been submitted. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-36

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-36) for 19 September 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Trinidad, a stunning quantity of rarities were reported within the past week, which unquestionably was the most productive in the island's history of birding. On 14 September, a winter-plumaged adult BLACK-TAILED GODWIT* (1st for T&T and South America) was found in the Caroni Rice Fields, where it was observed independently and studied carefully by two experienced birders. However, it has been remarkably elusive ever since. It was probably seen on 15 September by a birder who did not see it fly (but others could not relocate it), and it was carefully studied on 16 September by birders who flushed it to obtain photographs. On each occasion the bird was in semi-flooded fields just south of the runway. Attempts to relocate it later in the day and in the morning of 17 September were unsuccessful, but a party of birders who had previously seen it somehow stumbled across the same bird--easily recognisable by its distinctive plumage (see below)--on the west coast of Trinidad at Orange Valley, approximately 20 km south-southwest of the rice fields, at midday on 17 September. Although there are many North American records for this Eurasian species, it has been recorded only once previously from the Caribbean at St. Kitts on 24 September 1988 (Caribbean Journal of Science 33:1-20, 1997). A previous report of two cagebirds from Barbados was erroneous.

The Black-tailed Godwit is similar to the Hudsonian Godwit, but possesses a straighter bill (upturned in Hudsonian), a broad, white wingstripe on the upperwing (narrow in Hudsonian), mostly white underwings (mostly dark in Hudsonian), more extensive white rump/uppertail coverts and longer legs protruding farther beyond the tail in flight. In this particular bird the white wing stripe on the upper surface is extensive when viewed in flight; when standing, it is best recognised by a small patch of white clearly visible just above the bottom edge of both wings. The mostly white belly is marked by a patch of dark barring (traces of breeding plumage) in front of the legs, though the barred feathers will likely moult out soon. Because the Icelandic race "islandica" winters primarily in western Europe, we suspect the bird represents the western Palaearctic nominate race "limosa", which typically winters in tropical sub-Saharan Africa. The Trinidad bird may linger all winter and should be looked for along the west coast of Trinidad during low tide, where it likely will wander up and down the coast, and in the Caroni Rice Fields where it feasibly could reappear.

Other recent sightings from the Caroni Rice Fields include: the immature SNAIL KITE*, which consistently perches near the bamboo patch southwest of the runway, as recently as 17 September; an immature male and two immature COMB DUCKS* on 15 September; an APLOMADO FALCON* on 15 September; three WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS*, 12 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS and four WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 17 September; the first two BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS* of the season (and 23rd shorebird species in the rice fields for the season) on 17 September; a HUDSONIAN GODWIT (providing excellent comparisons with the Black-tailed Godwit) in a flooded pool east of the runway during 14-17 September; at least six BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS and a WESTERN SANDPIPER (rare inland) on 14 September; and two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (one dark, one light), a LAUGHING GULL (rare inland) and up to 50 RED KNOTS on 17 September. At nearby Valsayn, ten LESSER NIGHTHAWKS were hawking overhead at dusk on 14 September.

Despite the recent spate of rarities found in the Caroni Rice Fields, the west coast of Trinidad has been even more productive. In addition to the BLACK-TAILED GODWIT* relocated at Orange Valley on 17 September, a well-described adult KELP GULL* (1st for T&T; presumably the same individual seen at Waterloo during 8-10 July) was seen perched with a dozen LAUGHING GULLS on a boat beside the wharf at San Fernando on 18 September. Furthermore, two birders now believe they had casually mistaken the Kelp Gull for a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Carli Bay on 27 August, but no notes were taken. The Kelp Gull may well be lingering in the San Fernando area but should be searched for anywhere along the west coast of Trinidad. It resembles a Lesser Black-backed Gull, but is much blacker-backed, larger in size with a heavier bill, and has greenish-yellow legs duller than the yellow bill.

On 18 September, a WOOD STORK* (1st for T&T since 1942, though there are at least two reports lacking details from the mid 1990s) turned up at Waterloo, where it was seen on mudflats near the north end of Brickfield. Other noteworthy sightings from the west coast of Trinidad include a second-summer/third-winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL* and a WILSON'S PLOVER at Waterloo on 17 September, and a pair of RED-CAPPED CARDINALS along the Oropouche River on 18 September.

In Tobago, we received a second-hand report of a PROTHONOTARY WARBLER during the first week of September (earliest date for T&T).

In Barbados, the GREY HERON at Graeme Hall Swamp was seen as recently as 17 September. A flooded field at Norwoods held 37 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS and at least 74 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS on 17 September.

CORRIGENDA: The possible Cory's Shearwater photographed at St. Ann's Village, Mayaro, Trinidad, on 22 July (see SCBA 2000-29) turned out to be a subadult PARASITIC JAEGER*; it appeared very similar to the subadult Parasitic Jaeger loitering at Waterloo during the previous months, and may have been the same individual. In Little Tobago, two (rather than one) WHITE-WINGED SWALLOWS* were seen on 6 September (see SCBA 2000-35). The TEREK SANDPIPER* seen at Waterloo on 28 June 1999 (see SCBA 1999-27) turned out to be the fourth rather than the second record for South America; earlier records were from Argentina during December 1997 to January 1998 and in December 1990 (possibly the same bird?), and in Brazil in March 1997 (possibly the same bird in Trinidad in 1999 and Barbados in 2000?; see Cotinga 9:90, 1998).

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: In forests, mist netting effectively samples the understory avifauna, often resulting in the capture of species easily missed by observational census methods. However, mist netting is less effective in sampling midstory and canopy birds, unless the nets are elevated (which requires some ingenuity, plus considerable time and labor for raising and lowering nets). As a method for censusing birds, mist netting requires much time, labour and expense. Consequently it is less efficient than observational census methods. However, much biological data may be procured from captured birds which cannot be obtained otherwise. Until recently, mist netting was the standard method for censusing birds in tropical rain forests, where the difficulties of observing and identifying birds were most formidable. Today, however, experienced birders are capable of learning essentially all of the vocalisations of birds in even the most species-rich portions of the tropics.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-37

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-37) for 27 September 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Trinidad, the adult BLACK-TAILED GODWIT* (1st for T&T and South America) continues to be seen along the west coast between Waterloo and Orange Valley, where it was seen during low tide on 22 and 24 September and photographed on the latter date. To find this elusive bird, begin by searching the first mudflat south of the Hindu temple at Waterloo. If the bird is not present, drive southward toward Orange Valley, the first town south of Waterloo. Along this stretch of road there are numerous dirt roads branching westward a few hundred metres to the coast. Pick one of the better quality roads (some are impassable) and drive as far as you can, then walk to the shoreline and scan the nearby mudflats. You may have to check several of these roads as you work your way south before finding the bird.

Although the Black-tailed Godwit remains the prize attraction, other noteworthy birds should be looked for along the west coast, which has been visited almost daily by resident birders during the past few weeks. The adult KELP GULL* (1st for T&T) was probably seen, though only in flight, south of Waterloo on 23 September. On 25 September, a possible adult ARCTIC TERN* (potentially 1st for T&T) was carefully studied as it roosted with COMMON TERNS (fair numbers present this year) on the 'Brickfield' mudflats at the north end of Waterloo. It still retained its alternate (breeding) plumage and was described as having a bright red bill that was darker at the tip, bright red legs shorter than those of the Common Tern, wingtips extending well beyond the tail, and very little black in the wings; although not noted by the observers, the Arctic Tern also has a shorter bill.

Other noteworthy birds reported from the west coast include: four LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS*, including an adult, a 3rd-winter immature and two 2nd-summer immatures (one apparently a recent arrival), seen daily (up to 27 September) at Waterloo; a MARBLED GODWIT* seen almost daily at either Waterloo or Orange Valley (up to 24 September); a WILSON'S PLOVER* seen almost daily at Wallerfield (up to 26 September); a presumably escaped RINGED TURTLE-DOVE* (potentially 3rd for T&T) or EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE* (potentially 1st for T&T) at Waterloo on 23 September; a COCOI HERON at Waterloo on 23 September and up to six GREAT BLUE HERONS at Waterloo; a BLUE-WINGED TEAL on 26 September; two SOUTHERN LAPWINGS that hatched between late 16 and early 18 September and a third that hatched by 19 September in a nest at the International School at Diego Martin; up to three SANDWICH TERNS (all 'Cayenne') at Waterloo and Orange Valley up to 25 September; a SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHER* seen and several others heard in mangroves at Oropouche Swamp (where apparently well established) on 24 September; a BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOW at Waterloo on 23 September; and an ANHINGA, two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, a CLAPPER RAIL, a COMMON POTOO, a PYGMY KINGFISHER and two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS at Caroni Swamp on 12 September. The WOOD STORK* (1st for T&T since 1942) at Waterloo on 18 September has not been seen subsequently.

Most of the coastal seabirds and waders are best found during low tide, though at high tide spectacular concentrations of shorebirds occur at the Brickfield parking lot, the edge of the mangroves to the north and the small peninsula to the south. On 24 September, birders visiting South Oropouche Swamp were puzzled by an apparent Semipalmated Sandpiper with a distinct orangeish wash just behind and above the bill. Suspecting it could be an adult Little or Red-necked Stint moulting into basic (winter) plumage, photographs were taken. However, further inspection of shorebirds at the Brickfield parking lot on 26 September revealed variable amounts of orange on the face of several immatures and adults of both Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers. Obviously the birds are picking up some adventitious colouring while feeding at an unknown locality.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a DOUBLE-STRIPED THICK-KNEE* (5th for T&T, 4th for Trinidad) was reportedly observed at Wallerfield in late August or early September as well as a few months ago, though subsequent efforts to relocate it (including 23 September) were fruitless. The immature SNAIL KITE* continues to be seen, though rather irregularly, in the Caroni Rice Fields, with the latest sighting on 27 September. Three BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS* were reported from the rice fields on 27 September. Highlights on 25 August include: 22 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS, 62 RED KNOTS, 750 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 400 LEAST SANDPIPERS, 300 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS, 135 STILT SANDPIPERS, two HUDSONIAN GODWITS (two were also seen on 16 September, with the observer keenly disappointed neither was the Black-tailed Godwit) and a BANK SWALLOW*. Highlights on 23 August include: seven WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS*, 19 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS and ten FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, six LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (highest count for T&T?; two light, four dark) and 45 RED KNOTS. An exhausted SEMIPALMATED PLOVER was captured by hand (and carefully checked to eliminate Ringed Plover) in the rice fields on 19 September.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, recent sightings include: an APLOMADO FALCON* at Chaguanas on 22 September; a LESSER NIGHTHAWK at dusk at the intersection of the Uriah Butler Highway and the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway on 26 September and seven at the junction of the Southern Main Road and Churchill-Roosevelt Highway on 19 September; 15 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS, a SQUIRREL CUCKOO, a LITTLE CUCKOO and three RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPERS at the Aripo Livestock Station on 20 September; and a MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULET* at Wallerfield on 18 September.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, highlights from Kernahan Trace, Nariva Swamp, on 20 September include: a PINNATED BITTERN, three BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, two BLUE-WINGED TEAL, an AMERICAN PYGMY-KINGFISHER and a NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER.

Resident birders in Trinidad, who provide more than 99% of our reports, tend to concentrate their birding activities at the waterbird hotspots where vagrants are more likely to turn up, which explains why we receive comparatively fewer reports from the landbirding localities frequented mostly by visiting birders. In the Northern Range, recent reports from the Asa Wright Nature Centre include: an ORNATE HAWK-EAGLE apparently tidying up its nest since 10 September; a RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE (once a juvenile, but age not reported for other sightings) at the feeders of the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 10, 21 and 22 September; a CHESTNUT WOODPECKER on 21 September; and a late report of an immature or female RUFIOUS-SHAFTED WOODSTAR on 28 August. Along the trail to Cumaca, a RED-RUMPED WOODPECKER, a NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER, six SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHERS and three AMERICAN REDSTARTS were tallied on 22 September. At Morne Bleu, a CHESTNUT WOODPECKER and a female AMERICAN REDSTART (plus two Tayra, which are mustelid mammals) were noted on 21 September. A male HEPATIC TANAGER was reported from Las Lapas on 21 September. The first AMERICAN REDSTARTS of the season included a male at Mt. St. Benedict on 12

September, a male at the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 13 September and a female at Morne Bleu on 13 September.

At Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, researchers documented an abandoned TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD nest initially built by a colour-banded, polygynous trio that was later used as a platform for nesting GREAT KISKADEES and even later used by a nesting group of SMOOTH-BILLED ANIS, whose nestlings were discovered in the nest on 20 September. Another TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD nest built by a colour-banded monogamous pair was reused by an unbanded pair of mockingbirds whose clutch of four eggs was discovered in the nest a few days earlier (exact date unavailable at the moment). TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD nests appear to be a valuable resource in the Neotropics. In addition to frequent reuse by the mockingbirds, earlier this year two nests were reused by PALM TANAGERS and one other by a GREAT KISKADEE, and last year another nest was used by GREAT KISKADEES. Furthermore, a mockingbird nest last year and another this year appear to have been built by another species, possibly Palm Tanagers, since both were small and were completely devoid of the large twigs typical of mockingbird nests.

In Tobago, the WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD* (4th for T&T) continues to be seen irregularly at Little Tobago, where it was last reported on 21 August.

In Barbados, Nearctic landbird migration is well underway with a BLACKPOLL WARBLER (earliest date) and North American YELLOW WARBLER at Harrison Point on 22 September, plus an early YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO at Bailey Hill the same day. Shorebird migration continues unabated with 21 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS, two BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS, about 70 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS and about 45 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS tallied at Norwoods on 24 September.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Another advantage of mist netting birds is that individuals with unique color-band combinations may be more accurately censused using the spot mapping method. This method provides the best estimate of density, though censusing nonterritorial individuals is problematic. It is also the best method for studying survivorship on a territory and the dynamics of territorial change. The major drawback of this method is that it is labor intensive, requiring time and effort for capturing and banding birds in addition to subsequent spot mapping. Normally only one or a few species may be studied at a time.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The [T&T Rare Bird Committee](#), formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (review list available from Secretary; see below). Thus far 195 records have been submitted. Of 96 decisions, 76 (79.2%) were accepted, 18 (18.8%) rejected and two (2.1%) accepted with questionable natural occurrence. Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-38

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-38) for 4 October 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. If you are a visiting birder and have benefitted from this service, please let us know what you've seen. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see end of report) for species indicated with an asterisk.

WHY SO MANY RARITIES? A staggering amount of rarities continue to be reported from Trinidad, with 1 October undoubtedly representing the most extraordinary day for rarities in the island's history (see below). We are sometimes asked why so many rarities are being reported, with suggested answers including changing climates, anthropogenic degradation of the environment and the increased frequency of storms in the Caribbean. The answer, however, is plain and simple: more resident birders are searching for rarities more often in the hottest birding hotspots. And the 'domino effect' helps: when a rare bird shows up, birders searching for it often find other rarities.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: On 1 and 2 October, Tropical Storm Joyce roared across the southeastern Caribbean, dumping a fair amount of rain though not nearly as much as expected. Hurricanes and tropical storms are notorious for blowing birds (especially seabirds) far from their normal haunts, but did Tropical Storm Joyce strand any vagrant birds in its wake? We'll answer this question at the end of our report.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the adult BLACK-TAILED GODWIT* (1st for T&T and South America) continues to be seen on the mudflats between Waterloo and Orange Valley, where it was relocated just south of the Hindu temple at Waterloo on 30 September and along a mudflat just north of Orange Valley (1.5 km south of the temple) on 1 October. The adult KELP GULL* (1st for T&T) was also seen in the same flock of birds as the Black-tailed Godwit at Orange Valley on 1 October. Other noteworthy sightings at Waterloo on 30 September include two LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* (2nd-winter and a 3rd-winter immatures), two WILSON'S PLOVERS (adult and immature), the 1st PEREGRINE FALCON of the season (earliest date for T&T), and the 1st NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH of the season. An odd golden-plover carefully studied at Waterloo on 30 September appeared intermediate between PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (no previous records for T&T) and AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER.

Farther south, a half dozen GREATER FLAMINGOES* turned up on the mudflats of La Romain on 28 September, but have not been seen subsequently. A possible SNAIL KITE* (described as slate grey with red legs and a red cere, but the observer was unable to obtain clear views of the tail) was briefly seen at Woodlands on 2 October.

The Caroni Rice Fields were amazingly productive over the weekend, with 24 species of shorebirds tallied on 1 October. The highlight was two WILSON'S PHALAROPES* (3rd for T&T, 2nd for Trinidad), one with traces of juvenile plumage, on 1 October. They were seen swimming in the flooded field just northeast of the bridge near the southwestern entrance; however, they have not been seen subsequently. An adult female RUFF* ('Reeve'; 6th for Trinidad) was briefly seen on 30 September and relocated on 1 October, but it flew off far toward the south and has not been seen subsequently. BOBOLINKS* (7th for T&T, 3rd for Trinidad) staged yet another invasion the rice fields just as they did last year, with 37 tallied on 1 October (earliest date for T&T) and at least 50 on 2 October, but none were seen on 3 October. They occurred in two separate flocks: one just east of the western entrance (Caroni Swamp flyover) and another along the S-shaped curve just northeast of the runway.

Other noteworthy sightings from the rice fields include: the immature SNAIL KITE* seen daily in the bamboo patch southwest of the runway up to 4 October; up to six LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (two pale, four dark) on 3 October; an early PEREGRINE FALCON on 1 October; up to two PINNATED BITTERNs on 1 October; a lingering COMB DUCK* (4th for T&T) on 1 October (latest date for T&T); 20+ WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 2 October; a BLUE-WINGED TEAL on 30 September and three on 1 October; two FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 1 October; seven BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 1 October; eight SCARLET IBISES on 1 October; up to 13 LIMPKINS on 2 October; up to seven BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS (highest count inland for T&T?); on 2 October but only one AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER on 1 and 2 October; four BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS* on 1 October and two on 2 October; 32 RED KNOTS on 1 October but only 16 on 2 October; eight WILLETS (highest count inland for T&T?) on 1 October; a HUDSONIAN GODWIT up to 4 October; a COMMON SNIPE on 2 October (26th shorebird species for the season in the rice fields); a LAUGHING GULL (rare inland) on 1 October; a GULL-BILLED TERN on 4 October; 34 PURPLE GALLINULES (highest count for T&T?) on 1 October; a BANK SWALLOW* on 1 October and two on 2 October; and four COMMON WAXBILLS on 1 October.

In Barbados, two juvenile BROWN PELICANS (very rare) turned up at Six Men's Bay on 30 September. Norwoods continues to produce fair numbers of shorebirds, with four BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS on 27 and 29 September; on the latter date, 13 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS, 21 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS and 38 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS were tallied. Newly arriving Nearctic migrants include two GREAT EGRETS and a TRICOLORED HERON at Graeme Hall Swamp on 1 October, a RED-EYED VIREO at Harrison Point on 30 September, and a BOBOLINK at Bailey Hill on 28 and 29 September.

THE ANSWER: Did Tropical Storm Joyce strand any vagrant birds in the region? The answer remains unknown. Most of the vagrants occurring along the west coast of Trinidad were already present by the time the storm struck. Others, such as the Wilson's Phalaropes and Bobolinks, were migrants from the north. The female Ruff, a Eurasian vagrant, may have flown across the Atlantic ahead of the storm, but it appeared to be an adult rather than an immature, so it also could have migrated southward from North America. Storm-blown seabirds may have been stranded along the east coast of Trinidad, which birders did not visit until the afternoon of 2 October; however, two GREAT BLUE HERONS on the beach at Manzanilla Bay were the only unusual birds seen. Birders eagerly searching for storm-blown vagrants on Barbados were likewise disappointed. Nevertheless, a few trans-Atlantic vagrants occur annually in the region and a few undetected birds may have been blown across the Atlantic by Hurricane/Tropical Storm Joyce. Such vagrants should be searched for during the upcoming months.

CORRIGENDA: In Tobago, the WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD* (4th for T&T) was last reported at Little Tobago on 21 September--not 21 August.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Observational methods for directly counting the number of birds detected (seen or heard) generally fall into two categories: transects and point counts. Transect methods involve counting birds while moving along a line of known length. Birds may be counted by walking, or from a car, boat or plane. The line should be relatively straight, but this may not be possible, such as along a

Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2000-47

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2000-47) for 6 December 2000. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes at (868) 645-3232 x2047 (W), 662-5918 (H), or by e-mail at floyd_hayes@hotmail.com. The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see website above and end below) for species indicated with an asterisk.

PHOTO GALLERY: Photographs of White-winged Swallow (1st for Tobago) and Buff-breasted Sandpiper (rare in Tobago) from October are now posted at the SCBA website (see address above).

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Each winter several thousand Laughing Gulls and a few individuals of other species winter along the west coast of Trinidad--clearly the region's 'Gulltopia'--where they are apparently attracted to the fishing industry. After an unusually productive summer and autumn, this winter is already brewing to be Trinidad's best gull winter ever. At Waterloo, a 1st-winter immature FRANKLIN'S GULL* (3rd for T&T and earliest date) was picked out among 1800 LAUGHING GULLS on 3 and 4 December. Meanwhile on 3 December, six different LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* (highest count for T&T and South America) were tallied along the west coast of Trinidad, including: (1) a normal adult among 500 LAUGHING GULLS at San Fernando; (2) a 'ring-billed' adult at Waterloo; (3) a 3rd-winter immature with advanced adult-like plumage (dark grey mantle with faint brownish greater primary coverts visible in flight, an all-white tail, and a pale bill with a dark subapical 'band' of the bill) appearing for the first time at Waterloo; (4-5) two 2nd/3rd-winter immatures (one appears older or more advanced than the other) at Orange Valley and Waterloo; and (6) a 1st-winter immature appearing for the first time at Waterloo. On 4 December, four of the LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS* were relocated at Waterloo and the adult at San Fernando. The elusive KELP GULL* (1st for T&T) has not been observed since 10 November, but may well be lingering in the area. Somewhat unusual was a LAUGHING GULL in full breeding plumage at San Fernando on 3 December.

To search for these gulls and other waterbirds, drive southward on the Uriah Butler/Solomon Hochoy Highway from the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway intersection. After 18.8 km, veer left onto the 0.5 km long Freeport exit and turn right at its end; follow this road 1.0 km to a stoplight on the Southern Main Road and continue straight across the light for 2.0 km to a T-junction. Turn left onto Orange Field Road and proceed 3.9 km, turning right on a paved road just beyond the fenced compound of the Caroni Research Station on the right. Continue past the Carillion Waterloo Depot Facilities on the left until you reach a sharp bend to the left and, after 0.9 km, a sharp bend to the right; at this sharp bend to the right, drive straight instead of turning right and continue 0.5 km to the paved parking lot of a fishing facility on the coast (the village here is called Brickfield). From the north side of the parking lot you may walk or drive northward on a narrow dirt track to get closer to extensive mudflats where gulls and other waterbirds congregate during low tide.

After examining the mudflats at Brickfield, backtrack to Orange Field Road and turn right; continue 0.5 km to an intersection and continue straight across 0.3 km to the parking lot of a Hindu temple built at the end of a causeway jutting out into the Gulf of Paria. Park at the northwestern end of the parking lot and walk northward a short distance to a point of land overlooking an extensive mudflat (exposed during low tide) studded with old wooden pilings. Search for gulls and other waterbirds on these mudflats and on anchored boats just off the coast. Then drive south across the parking lot to an adjacent crematorium and park at its southwestern end. Scan for gulls and other waterbirds on the mudflats to the south. The main gull flock tends to shift unpredictably from one mudflat to another.

After checking out Waterloo, backtrack 0.3 km to the intersection and turn right, proceeding southward parallel to the coast. During the next 1.5 km there are several dirt tracks on the right that lead a short distance to the coast, where gulls and other waterbirds often congregate on the mudflats; a few of these roads are worth exploring, but may be impassable if muddy. After 2.1 km along the paved road, turn right on Bay Street, the first paved road as you enter Orange Valley, and continue 0.6 km to a gas station and fishing facilities on the coast. Once again search the mudflats for gulls and other waterbirds. Then have fun finding your way back home.

Directions to finding gulls at the San Fernando Public Fish Market were given in SCBA 2000-44. Because of a massive land-reclamation project just north of the wharf, birders are recommended to avoid visiting the area on weekdays.

Other noteworthy birds recently recorded along the west coast include: 130 YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS, a light-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER, an immature female PEREGRINE FALCON unsuccessfully ambushing a Cattle Egret, a GULL-BILLED TERN and a FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER (presumably of the northern race 'monachus') at Waterloo on 4 December; a basic plumaged LITTLE EGRET*, about 50 COMMON TERNS and a ROYAL TERN at San Fernando on 3 December; three SANDWICH TERNS (two 'Cayenne' and one 'Sandwich') and seven COMMON TERNS at Orange Valley on 3 December; five GREAT BLUE HERONS, a dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER, two SANDWICH TERNS ('Cayenne') and a COMMON TERN at Waterloo on 3 December; and a MANGROVE CUCKOO and a GREATER ANI in Caroni Swamp on 24 November. This winter appears to have higher numbers of Common Terns but lower numbers of Royal Terns than in recent winters. Somewhat inland at Pointe-a-Pierre, an ANHINGA was noted sitting on a nest (3rd breeding record for Trinidad) beside 23 active nests of CATTLE EGRETS on 3 December; other birds seen included a dark-phased SHORT-TAILED HAWK, two STREAKED-HEADED WOODCREEPERS and three RED-CAPPED CARDINALS.

Bird aficionados are always entertained by intriguing bird behaviours. While driving along the M2 Ring Road between San Fernando and Penal on 28 November, a birder was shocked to see a PEREGRINE FALCON whiz past his car at over 60 km/hr and slam into a flying CATTLE EGRET. White feathers spewed from the egret as both birds plummeted to the ground. As the birder pulled up beside the birds, the falcon looked up momentarily while perched atop the egret and apparently allowed the egret to jump up and fly away. The falcon flew after it in hot pursuit as both birds disappeared from view.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, two or three possible HOUSE MARTINS* (potentially 1st for T&T and South America) were observed at the old terminal of Piarco International Airport on 29 November. Although none were found during searches in the evening of 5 December and morning of 6 December, roughly 400 GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS arrived to roost on the old terminal about 10-15 min after sundown on 5 December. Other birds noted included a MERLIN on 5 December and an ANHINGA on 6 December. Birders visiting the airport should scrutinize any martins present.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, two LITTLE EGRETS*, a MERLIN and four BLACK-NECKED STILTS were reported at Trinicity on 6 December, and a single LITTLE EGRET* and eight YELLOW-BILLED TERNS were present on 28 November. At Orange Field, a surprising concentration of shorebirds found in a pond on 6 December included 70 STILT SANDPIPERS, 50 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 12 BLACK-NECKED STILTS, eight SOLITARY SANDPIPERS and two LEAST SANDPIPERS; a RINGED

KINGFISHER and two COMMON WAXBILLS were also present. A LIMPKIN was noted in Aripo Savannahs on 23 November. A COMMON POTOO, three WHITE-TAILED NIGHTJARS and four COMMON PAURAQUES were tallied at Wallerfield on 23 November. Two RUDDY-BREASTED SEEDEATERS* were seen at the Aripo Livestock Station on 21 November.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, recent reports from the Asa Wright Nature Centre include three SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWKS flying over the parking lot at dusk on 1 December; an immature RUDDY GROUND-DOVE with an injured foot feeding at the balcony as recently as 1 December; and a YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSH on 19 November. Along the Blanchisseuse Road, recent noteworthy birds include: a SCALED ANTPITTA* heard (intermittently for nearly a year) between Morne Bleu and Brasso Seco Junction on 25 November; two YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSHES north of Brasso Seco Junction on 29 November; and a SILVERED ANTBIRD, two OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS and a SPECKLED TANAGER at unspecified localities on 20 November. Recent sightings of STREAKED FLYCATCHERS, most of which depart from Trinidad in winter, include one at Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, on 2 December, and another at the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 19 November. A SPECTACLED OWL has been calling regularly and was once observed at Lady Chancellor Hill, near Port of Spain, within the past week. In San Juan, a MERLIN has been seen daily and on one occasion was observed feasting on a BLUE-GRAY TANAGER.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, 20 RED-BELLIED MACAWS, a WHITE-TAILED GOLDENTHROAT and a RINGED KINGFISHER were seen in Nariva Swamp on 21 November.

In Tobago, a flycatcher thought to be a TROPICAL PEWEE* (potentially 1st for Tobago, but voice not heard) was carefully studied along the Bloody Bay Road about 2 miles above Roxborough on 1 December. We received a second-hand report that the two WHITE-WINGED SWALLOWS* (1st for Tobago) at Speyside were joined by a third about a month ago. An elusive WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD* (4th for T&T, though all records since 1998 may pertain to the same two individuals) continues to be seen intermittently at Little Tobago, where it was last reported on 26 November. An adult and an immature RED-FOOTED BOOBY were also seen at Little Tobago on 26 November. At Buccoo, a CARIBBEAN COOT* and a MANGROVE CUCKOO* were seen on 29 November; the previous day, 28 November, a GREAT BLUE HERON, a BLUE-WINGED TEAL, the CARIBBEAN COOT* and a PROTHONOTARY WARBLER were noted.

In Guadeloupe, two BLACK TERNS (2nd for Guadeloupe) were noted in Grand Cul de Sac Marin on 3 December. At Marais de St Felix, two immature female CAPE MAY WARBLERS were seen on 25 November and two adult females or immature males were seen on 30 November.

In Barbados, a female RUFF turned up at Fosters, St. Lucy, on 5 December. Other birds noted include: three RING-NECKED DUCKS at Mangrove, St. Philip, on 4 December, and one at Fosters, St. Lucy, on 5 December; at least six BANK SWALLOWS at Mangrove on 4 December; a PROTHONOTARY WARBLER at Graeme Hall on 30 November and another at Hall Woods on 3 December; and two SORAS and an estimated 30 COMMON SNIPE at Fosters on 5 December.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: The annual Christmas Bird Count for northern Trinidad, sponsored by the Asa Wright Nature Centre, will be held all-day on Saturday, 30 December. If you wish to participate, please contact Graham White by phone (673-4585, evenings) or e-mail (g-white@tstt.net.tt).

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: The period of time used for each point count has been the subject of much research. Studies have demonstrated that most birds are detected within the first several minutes of a point count, with relatively few new birds detected after 10 minutes. The most frequently used time periods are 5 or 10 minutes. A shorter period enables an observer to conduct more counts, thus increasing the sample size, but also results in fewer individuals per count and more zero samples.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, g-white@tstt.net.tt.